

# THE BLUE PEARL







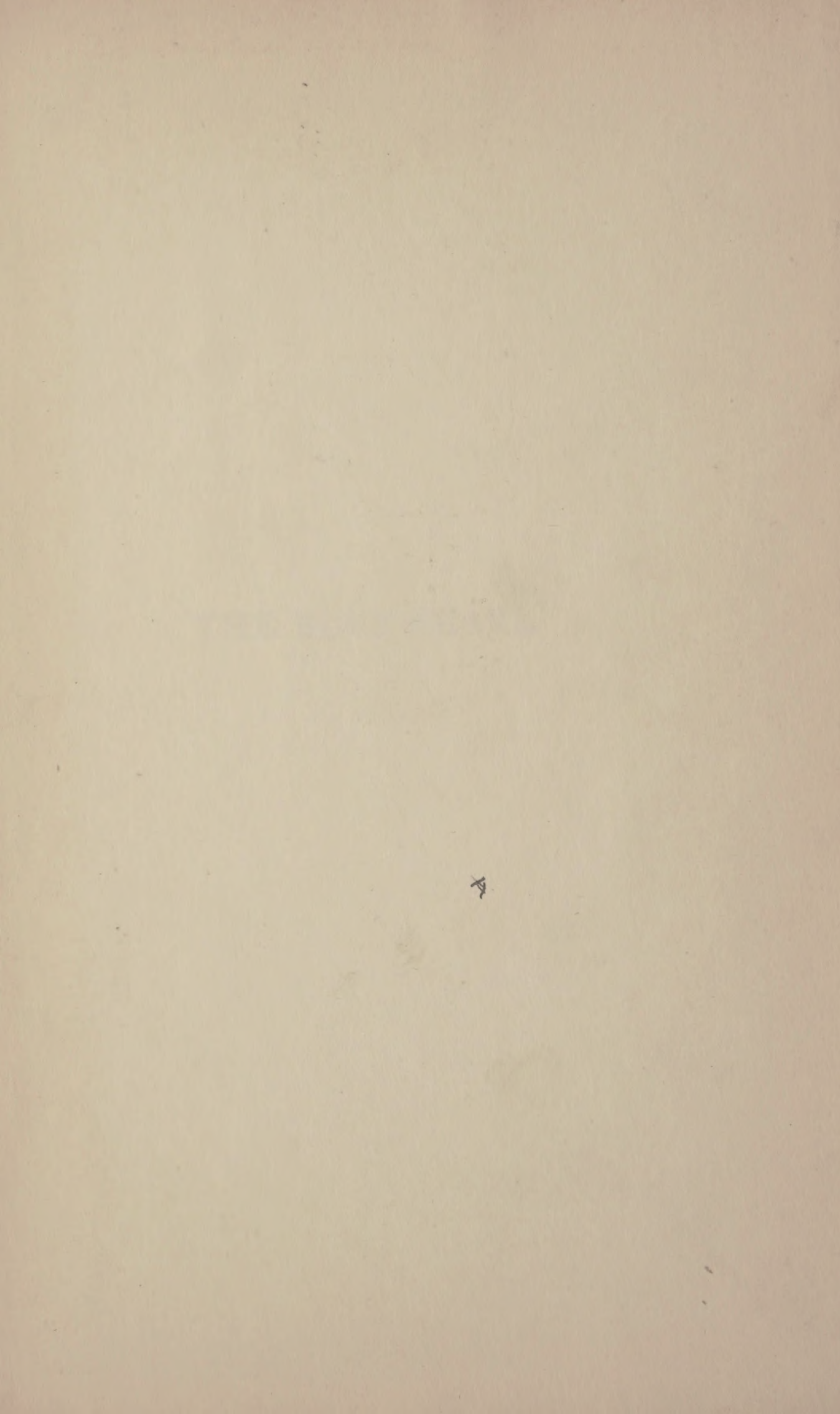
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THE BLUE PEARL

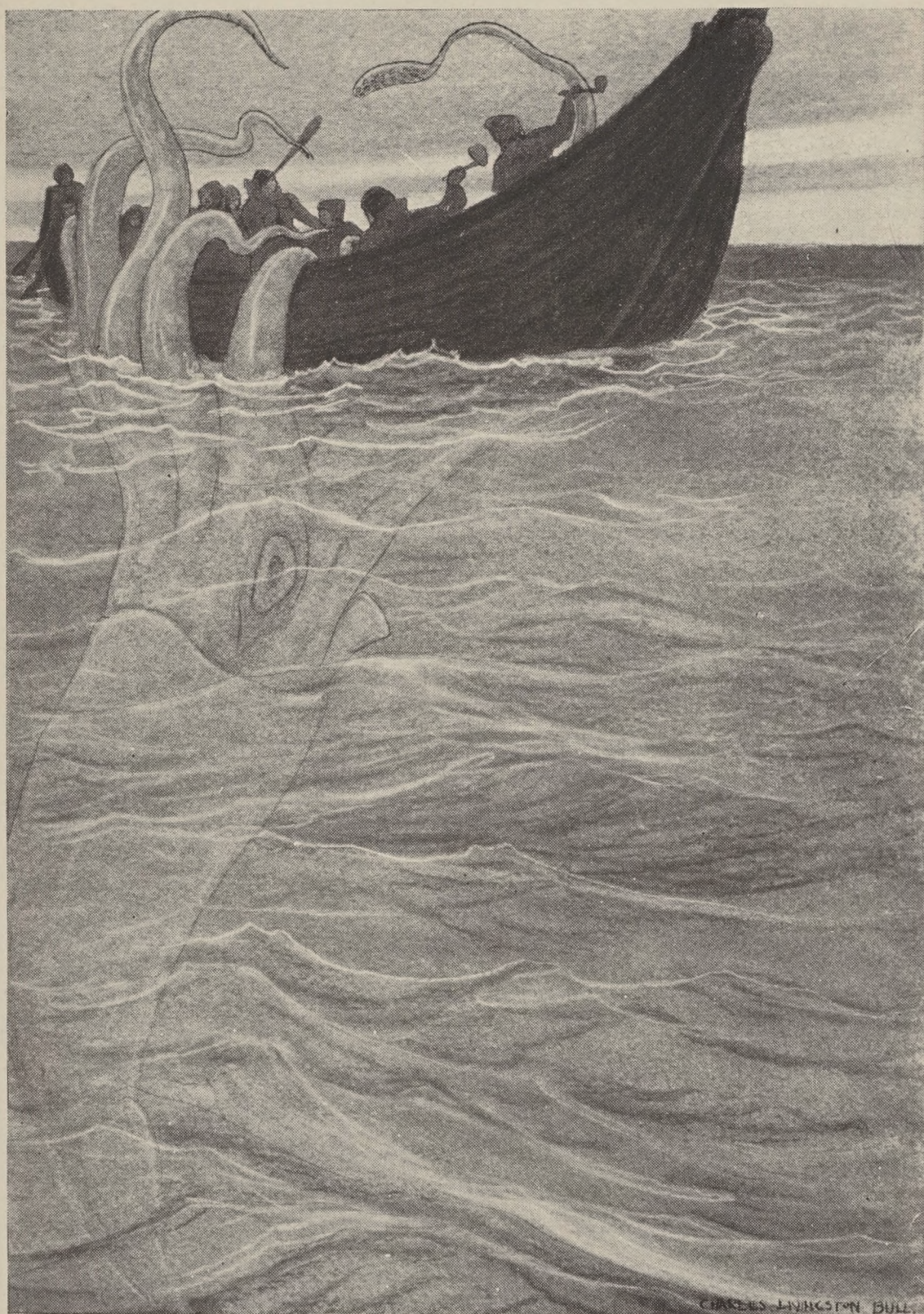












"The Kraken, the Kraken," shouted Saanak



# THE BLUE PEARL

BY

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

Author of "BOY SCOUTS IN THE WILDERNESS," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL



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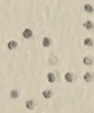
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J. M. F. Feb. 10, 1932

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED  
TO  
THE BOY SCOUTS  
OF  
PHILADELPHIA AND OF DELAWARE  
AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES,  
PENNSYLVANIA,  
WITH WHOM I HAVE WORKED  
AND PLAYED FOR MANY YEARS







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THE BLUE PEARL







# THE BLUE PEARL

## CHAPTER I

### THE ARGONAUTS

“**F**IFTY thousand dollars!” said Big Jim Donegan.

“Not for one pearl!” exclaimed Will Bright.

“For a *blue* pearl,” corrected the lumberking. “Bring me one as big as the pink pearl you found last summer and I’ll pay that for it cash down. But what’s the use of talkin’,” he went on morosely, “there ain’t such a thing. Nobody ever saw a big blue pearl.”

“I have,” quietly asserted a slim, swarthy boy who during the whole evening had never been more than a foot away from Will.

Big Jim opened his mouth to roar as he usually did whenever any one differed with him—and then shut it again. He had found that it did not pay to contradict Joe Couteau,



that boy with the blood of a long line of sure, silent Indian chiefs in his veins.

It was some two years after Will and Joe had come back from their great adventure already chronicled in the "Boy Scouts in the Wilderness." Without food, fire or clothing they had spent thirty days in the forest; fought for their lives with savage beasts and still more savage men; found a great pink pearl; broken up a band of moonshiners; and last and best of all had won for their Boy Scout troop a cabin and ten acres of timber-land from Mr. Donegan. Since that time old Jim Donegan, the lumber-king of America, had become a firm friend of the Boy Scouts of Cornwall. Especially did he admire Will and Joe who had proved to him that he was wrong in his estimate of the Boy Scouts and from whom he had bought the pink pearl—at a price. Tonight the whole Troop was being entertained on his estate; and, after a wonderful dinner, the old man had offered to show the boys his collection of precious stones which, except for making money early and often, was his only hobby.



After dinner he had taken them into the library. There upon touching a spring in the wall a great bookcase, filled with books, swung forward showing the side of a vast vault of chrome-steel. Unlocking a whole nest of combination-locks one after another, an enormous door opened silently and the Troop entered a solid steel room. The long cabinet of satin-wood drawers lined with black velvet held the famous collection of the lumber-king. For an hour or more he showed the delighted boys his treasures. As drawer after drawer was opened, the little room seemed filled with the shimmer and sheen of a perfect rainbow of colors. There were the red blink and flare of rubies, with their sullen depths of blood and fire, from Brazil and India and the far-away Caucasus, which, carat for carat, outpriced the best diamonds of Kimberley. Some of them were large enough to have names and stories. Three of them had been part of the loot of pirate-ships and they gleamed vengefully from the black velvet as if all the blood and pain and sin of those cruel crews had been crystallized in their blood-red



depths. Another drawer was full of the cool, deep, unfathomable green of emeralds, with a flash in their depths such as one sees in a great wave as it breaks in the sun. Some had been dug by short-lived serfs in the Ural Mountains centuries ago. Others had been part of the treasure which Cortez and Pizarro brought back from the hoards of Montezuma and Inca. Then there was the cold star-shine of great diamonds, water-white like fire and ice, while one yellow diamond shone like golden Jupiter in a midnight sky. Rarest of them all was "Hellheart," smoky black with a red heart of flame. The tradition was that it had belonged to Blackbeard, the pirate. It was cut in the shape of a great heart by some unknown lapidary. Mr. Donegan told the boys that no diamond-cutter of to-day could cut the wonderful faceted heart which smouldered before them. There were ice-blue sapphires; opals, a tortured blaze of prismatic colors and delicate translunary tints; apple-green jade; turquoises like robins' eggs; soft, lustrous moonstones, chrysoprase, jacinths, sea-blue aquamarines, masses of lapis-lazuli and mala-



chite; strange shifting cat's-eyes; pale yellow topazes; white sapphires which glowed instead of glittering; fiery, scarlet carbuncles; cynophane, with its wire-like line of silver—few of the kings of earth had a collection which could equal the one belonging to Jim Donegan, who had begun life as a lumber-jack.

At last, the old man drew out one drawer larger than all the others, filled with a shimmering, multi-colored mass of pearls, his favorite gem. They glowed as if holding some hidden, soft light within, and were graded and shaded with all the art that the trained eye and skill of the old collector could command. Not one of them there but was worth a small fortune. Some of them were round, gleaming pearls from far-away shark-haunted seas! Others were the larger irregular treasures torn from the four-hundred-odd kinds of fresh-water mussels that are found in all of our rivers, brooks and lakes. The colors were as different as the shapes. White, black, brown, amber, yellow and green were all there. By itself glowed the lustrous pink pearl that Will had found, that Scar Dawson



had stolen and that Joe had rescued. Yet among all that rainbow there was no shade of blue.

"You fellows stay a bit," Mr. Donegan said gruffly to Will and Joe. "I 'll send you home in my car later on."

When the last guest was gone Jim turned to the Indian boy.

"Tell me all about that blue pearl!" he demanded.

Joe looked at him silently for a moment.

"Once when I very little," he said at last, "I went with my uncle to Goreloi. That mean Island of the Bear," he explained. "He big medicine-man and he want to be bigger, so he go to get blue pearl. That very good medicine," the boy explained.

"You bet it's good medicine," muttered the old collector, "but what did he want to take a kid like you along for anyway?"

"Because," answered Joe, "he afraid to trust any man with secret. Man might kill him when he sleep and take pearl," he went on simply. "He take me because I young and



his own blood and he need some one to watch while he hunted."

"Watch for what?" interrupted Mr. Donegan again.

Joe paused a moment.

"That place not have its name for nothing," he at last responded. "It guarded."

"If it were any one else," broke in Will, "I 'd think this was all a fairy story."

"I, myself, see," returned Joe gravely.

"Go on, go on," urged the lumber-king.

Joe thought for a moment.

"We come to little blue river," he continued at last. "It run out of great dark cave in mountain. I sit in canoe with paddle ready to push off while chief hunt, hunt, hunt for pearl. At night we camp in little cave and roll big stone in front of entrance. One day, two day, three day he hunt. Then on last day he open big mussel and pull out blue, shiny stone and call very loud. I call too very loud, 'cause just behind him come pad, pad, pad great brown beast. It look like bear but bigger, fiercer than any bear any one



ever saw except in a bad dream. Chief reach canoe just in time. I push off and we hardly get away. Then chief show me pearl. It was bright blue and big as pigeon-egg. Then we paddle a day and a night and get back to tribe."

Old Jim Donegan had leaned forward so as not to miss a syllable of the boy's story. When Joe had finished the old man looked at him for a long time without speaking.

"I haven't wife, nor chick nor child," he said at last slowly. "My collection takes the place of them all. No collection on earth has a pearl like the one you saw. I've got to have one from that same river."

Joe shook his head.

"No one knows the way to Goreloi," he said, "except Great Chief. He may be dead. When I left tribe he had gone away on far journey South. Maybe he never come back."

The old man paced up and down the room and made Joe describe the pearl over and over again.

"Boys," he said at last, "I want you fellows to go to Goreloi, wherever it is, and bring me



back a blue pearl. I 'll finance the trip and if you have any luck, you 'll have more money in three months than most men get in ten years. School stops next week. You might just as well make money this vacation instead of spending it."

The boys looked at each other.

"I 'll bet," went on the old man, "that you fellows find vacations here kind o' dull after killin' bears and carcajous and rattlesnakes and huntin' pearls and fightin' moonshiners on your last one! Here 's a chance to travel and have adventures! Why, boys," he went on earnestly, "when you get as old as I am, you 'll know that the adventurous life is the best life. The boy who is always lookin' for adventures, who is always ready for quests, who learns to face dangers and overcome difficulties—that 's the kind of a boy who amounts to something when he gets to be a man. It 's the strenuous life that counts. We weren't put into this world to play safe, but to seek and fight and find and wander, and to never, never quit!"

The old lumber-king stopped and looked at them sadly.



"If I were ten years younger, or if I could only depend on my legs, I 'd go with you myself," he said at last, "and we 'd have a great old time together, too! Nowadays, though, my adventurin' has to be done for me and I 'm appointin' you fellows my proxies. Pick out two more chaps to go with you that you can depend on. Four is the right number for a hard trip. I 'll grub-stake you and if there is such a thing as a big, blue pearl, you fellows are to find it. What do you say?"

Will looked at Joe.

"Listens kind o' good to me, old scout," he exclaimed.

Joe shook his head doubtfully.

"Long, hard trip," he said briefly. "My uncle say to me danger, sorrow, death always price of blue pearl."

The lumber-king looked disgusted.

"You 'd better get Joe some nice thick wool socks," he remarked to Will sarcastically; "his feet ain't any too warm!"

"You 've got another guess coming," returned Will indignantly. "Joe always '*talks* safe and *acts* dangerous'! If you had been



with him in the tight places where I have, you would n't speak that way."

"There, there," soothed the lumber-king. "I take it all back. Any kid that helped break up Scar Dawson's gang and went through what he did with you certainly has n't got anything the matter with his circulation," and he patted Joe's unresponsive back apologetically. "You boys think it over, and come back here to-morrow night and let me know what you decide."

All the way home the boys talked it over. At least, Will talked and Joe grunted. They separated without coming to any decision. The next day at school they thought far more of blue pearls and bears and Indians than they did of algebra and history and English. Just before the day's session was over, Mr. Sanford, the young principal, read to their class a translation from the Greek of the story of the Golden Fleece.

"And they rowed over the wine-dark sea, heroes all beyond the sunset where were gold and pearls and mysterious enchanted



islands and strange peoples. For some death awaited, for others riches, for all a fame which still rings across the vanished years."

As he finished Will turned to find Joe watching him closely. Will raised his eyebrows questioningly. Joe gave a little nod. The Quest of the Blue Pearl had begun.

That night a strange thing happened. They had gone to Mr. Donegan's house to tell him of their decision. The lumber-king was delighted and just as he was promising that he would persuade Will's parents to let him go his English butler came in to him, much disturbed.

"There 's a h'individual at the door who insists upon seeing you, sir," he announced.

"Did n't you tell him I was busy, James?" snapped the old man irritably.

"Indeed I did, sir," returned the perturbed James. "H'all he said was that he was going to get busy himself."

"He did, eh!" exclaimed Mr. Donegan. "Well, you show him in, and I'll attend to his business mighty quick."



A moment later the door opened and in slipped a little, wiry, gray-bearded man with sharp, black, unflinching eyes.

"Hello, Jim!" he said. "Howdy, Will," he went on, turning to the boys.

"Well, if it ain't old Jud Adams!" shouted the lumber-king, seizing one of his hands while Will grabbed the other. "Why did n't you send your name in?" went on Mr. Donegan, shaking the old man affectionately.

"I did," said Jud, rescuing himself with some difficulty from the over-enthusiastic greetings of his friends. "I told that chap with a shiny shirt on that I was Jud Adams. He kept a sayin', 'You ain't no judge, come some other time,' but I said to him, 'Now is the time.' "

Old Jud had spent the best part of his life in the open. It was he who had given Will his first lessons in woodcraft. He had prospected and trapped and hunted all over the North American continent. In his youth he had spent a year with an Eskimo tribe. Later he had been in the Klondike rush, and was one of the first to go over fatal "Dead Horse



Pass," and had dug for gold from the Mexican border up to beyond Circle City.

"Jim," said Jud finally, "I hear that you 're goin' to grub-stake a party to do some prospectin' in the Northwest."

"How did you hear that?" said Big Jim in astonishment.

"Never mind," said Jud, "nobody can't do any treasure-huntin' in this village without me hearin' about it. If there's any prospectin' party goin' out from Cornwall I'm goin' to be in it. I've been all over the Northwest from the Aleutian Islands clear up above the Arctic Circle. I know the people, white, red and yellow. I've trapped and hunted and dug for gold and starved and fought and tramped over that whole blame country. There ain't many things out there that flies or creeps or runs that I have n't seen. One of these kids I taught all he knows, which ain't much," went on Jud without giving Mr. Donegan a chance to speak. "Here I am right in the prime o' life, pinin' away for somethin' to do, and I tell you, Jim Donegan,



you 'll make a bad mistake if you send out any party that does n't have me along."

"Prime o' life!" scoffed Big Jim. "Why, Jud, you 're sixty-five if you 're a day!"

"I ain't, I ain't!" shrieked the other. "But what if I be? It ain't a man's years that count. It's what he can do. There ain't anything that these kids can do that I can't do better."

"Well," said the lumber-king at last, "it's up to these boys. If they want you, I sure do!"

"You bet we want you, Jud," said Will, and Joe nodded approvingly.

Followed a long discussion of ways and means in which Jud's experience was a great help. As for guns the boys decided to take the new high-powered American army rifles which, using soft-nosed bullets, would stop anything. For himself Jud still clung to an old Sharp's rifle that with certain modern improvements he had used for over forty years.

So far as Joe could indicate on the map, the island where his tribe lived, as well as



that mysterious "Island of the Bear," were both parts of that fringe of islands which guard the shores of upper Alaska. It was while his uncle was away on his mysterious trip to the South, and while Joe was on a hunting-trip that his mother had been left to starve during one of the great famines which overtake, sooner or later, all Indian tribes. When he returned to find her dead, he had left the tribe and with the help of a near-by mission had managed to cross the continent and join his father's brother at Cornwall.

The expedition once decided upon, Mr. Donegan organized the details with the decision and dispatch which had made him a multi-millionaire. First he obtained the consent of Mr. and Mrs. Bright that Will might go—no small undertaking.

"If he succeeds, I 'll back him for the rest of my life—and afterwards," he assured them.

"That's a good deal for Big Jim Donegan to say," Mr. Bright remarked privately to his wife. "I guess, Mother, we 'll have to let the boy go. Life is just one chance after another, anyway. He's as liable to die plowin' as



pearlin’,” went on Mr. Bright, who was something of a philosopher. No such formality was necessary with old Hen Couteau, the charcoal burner, Joe’s uncle.

“I go back to see my people,” Joe announced.

“Yes?” said the old man. “Well, go ahead. You ain’t no use in the charcoal business—but I ’ll be glad to see you back again.”

The same night that he secured the consent of the Brights, Mr. Donegan wired to Port Townsend on Puget Sound, which was the headquarters for a fleet of steamers which he owned on the Pacific. He arranged to have the boys met there by the *Bear*, a swift seaworthy little steamer whose captain had cruised frequently through the northern waters and who, if anybody, would be likely to know his way to Akotan, the island where Joe’s tribe lived.

Remained only the choice of the last member of the party. Both Will and Joe were agreed that he must be a member of the Cornwall Troop. It was hard to choose. Buck Whittlesey and Billy Darby were leaders of



the Owl and Wolf patrols to which Will and Joe belonged respectively. Boots Lockwood and Freddie Perkins were enthusiastic woodsmen and devoted friends of both the boys; and then there was Jack Dorsey, the best shot in the town, and Bob Coulston, an Eagle Scout. It was hard to make a decision. At last Will had a bright idea.

"Next week," he said, "comes the Interscholastic Games. Every fellow whom we have thought of taking is on the team of the Cornwall High. Let's wait until after the Games and pick out the one who shows the most sand and sense at the Games."

Joe and Jud agreed.

"Better pick out a good runner," said the old trapper. "If Joe's tellin' the truth about that treasure island of his, we'll all need to be pretty lively on our legs in order to get back alive!"

For years the Cornwall High School had entered teams in the great Interscholastic Games where twenty schools competed for the championship of the East. So far she had never scored a point. Cornwall was a small



town, and, although her boys were a strong and sturdy lot, they had no track and only the crudest kind of training. Then came Mr. Sanford, the new principal. He solved the most complicated problems in algebra and geometry with dazzling ease. It was rumored that at college he used to read Greek aloud for the pleasure of it and translate the morning newspapers into Latin. Probably that was an exaggeration. At any rate he never showed any such alarming symptoms of learning at Cornwall. It was he, however, who had organized and become the scout-master of the Cornwall Boy Scouts. Under him Will and Joe had won the cabin for the Troop two years before, and it was Mr. Sanford who had helped rescue them from the burning cabin in that last never-to-be-forgotten fight with the moonshiners. It was not until school opened again that year, however, that the boys suspected that he knew anything about athletics. One afternoon when school was over, he had strolled down to the cow-pasture which the boys used for an athletic field and watched them training for the fall games. He seemed



to be more amused than impressed by their efforts. First he watched the sprinters of which Boots Lockwood was the particular star. Some of them started standing up, others crouched, but one and all hung on their marks when the last signal was given.

"If you 'll spring from both feet you 'll find that you get away faster," he suggested to the line of alleged sprinters. The boys smiled at each other, and went on with their own system. Mr. Sanford flushed a little.

"I 'll come back in a little while," he said finally, "and show you that I know what I 'm talking about."

His suggestions to the broad-jumpers on how to strike the take-off and his advice to the quarter-milers about their first hundred were met with the same indifference. Whereupon the principal left the field. Fifteen minutes later, he was back again carrying a traveling bag. With this he retired to the dressing-house, which had once been a cow-shed. Presently there emerged from this ex-cow-shed a figure in which the boys could scarcely recog-



nize their learned principal. He wore a sleeveless jersey and a pair of running-trunks. On his feet were the first pair of spiked running-shoes that had ever appeared at Cornwall, while in his hands he carried a pair of battered, nicked and grooved running-corks. The whole team gathered around him as he went toward the straight-away stretch of green turf where the sprinters practiced.

"Now," he said decisively, "pick out your three best men and start us off for the full distance."

Boots and two other sprinters lined up beside him while one of the other boys proceeded to start them. Mr. Sanford crouched down with the others, but as the starter said "Get set!" his lithe body slowly rose and at the very first breath of the final "Go!" he leaped into his stride and was off a full yard ahead of the rest. Run as they would, not one of the three best sprinters of the Cornwall High School was able to draw up level with him again. Then he went down to the broad-jump pit and with his first jump covered twenty feet, which



was six inches farther than anybody else could negotiate. When he finished, he was surrounded by an admiring group.

"You fellows want to remember," he said, puffing a little, "that even tottering old chaps like me may know something about athletics. If I am still here next year," he went on as he started back to the dressing-house, "I 'm going to put the Cornwall High School Athletic Team on the map."

Thereafter he called upon Big Jim Donegan. The old man came in puffing and rumbling and grumbling as usual.

"Well, Mr. Schoolmaster," he began, "what can I do for you? You 've taken a cabin and ten good acres of timber-land away from me for your Troop and made me pay those two kids of yours a frightful price for their pink pearl. Now what is it? Another hold-up, I expect."

"You have the idea," said the principal, who had become a fast friend of the old man. "I want you to help me turn out a winning athletic team for Cornwall High School and show these other schools we are the real stuff."



The lumber-king was all interest at once. He had been born in Cornwall.

"I 'm afraid you can't do it, Mr. Schoolmaster," he said sympathetically. "You know a lot about book-learnin', but I guess you never had time to learn much about runnin' and jumpin' and so on."

"Oh, I don't know," returned the other. "I used to know about athletics and perhaps I have n't forgotten it all yet. Anyhow, if you will help we can get a winning team."

"What do you want me to do?" queried old Jim. "I have n't time to go out and run on the team myself."

"Well, I 'll tell you, Mr. Donegan," said the principal. "I want you first to build the best quarter-mile cinder path that money can buy on that old cow-pasture that you let us use, and a little training house with some shower-baths in place of the old cow-stable. Then I 've just heard that old Mike Murphy, the best trainer in the world, wants to come up from Philadelphia and settle in a northern climate for his health. He trained the Yale Team which won the Intercollegiate years



ago, and the Olympic Team that won the championship of the world, and I can get him up here if you 'll foot the bill. Then I want you—”

“Whoa! Whoa!” yelled the old man. “I smoke, you know, and I 'd like you to leave me enough to buy a little tobacco now and then!”

“Well,” returned Mr. Sanford, “I 'll let you off from anything more except running-suits and spiked shoes.”

Old Jim thought for a moment.

“You 're on,” he said finally. “Go as far as you like! Only—I expect a *winning* team.”

Followed great doings for the Cornwall High School. A thin-faced man with reddish hair, cold, blue eyes, and a gray moustache came to town. He had been seen to slap the dignified principal of the high-school violently on the back and call him “Dannie.” An army of workmen changed the cow-pasture into a well-appointed athletic-field. Then one afternoon, after school, the boys were gathered together and Mike, as everybody called him, gave them a little talk. He had the rare gift of arousing his audience. He



told the boys what athletics had done for America and how it helped men and boys to keep themselves straight and clean and strong. Then he went on to tell the boys stories of great athletes whom he had known and trained. He told of Owen, the first man who ever went under ten seconds for the hundred-yard dash in that great race when Jewett, Owen, Westing and Carey all started in the finals, each with a different start. He told them of old Deerfoot, the Indian, who, running in his moccasins, set a world record of eleven miles and nine hundred and seventy yards for the hour, and of the great professional race of W. G. George and Bill Lang when the mile record went down to  $4.12\frac{3}{4}$ .

"But the best race I ever saw, lads," he finally ended, "was the day when Yale won the Intercollegiate Cup for keeps after a dozen colleges had been tryin' for twenty years. The half-mile race was the last event. Fifty men started. When they turned into the home-stretch, at the last lap, there were three men left and you could have covered them all with a blanket. Neck and neck and neck they



came down, staggerin' and weavin' around, all gone, and just before they got to the tape there was one slim little chap, a quarter-mile runner, who had won the quarter only an hour before and had no business to be runnin' in the half. He threw his head back and the foam lay on his lips and he clenched his corks and he come in, and drew away from that bunch, runnin' on nothin' at all but the nerve and courage of him! An' he broke the tape a foot ahead of the two best half-milers in the world. An' he broke the Intercollegiate record, and won the cup, an' he's right here before you and his name's Dannie Sanford!"

There was a sudden silence as the boys looked at Mr. Sanford, who blushed and tried to stop Mike. Then there was a storm of cheers and applause, after which the trainer went on.

"He sent for me, boys. He says you've been the laughin'-stock of the whole school league, but if you fellows will come out and do what I tell you, next spring *you* 'll be doin' the laughin'."

That was the beginning of it. There were



seventy-six boys in the school. Seventy-five of them signed up that afternoon to try for the athletic team. The only reason the seventy-sixth did n't was because he had only one leg. All that winter the boys ran cross-country, rain, shine, snow or cold. Day after day, Mike trained and trained and trained them, indoors and out. The over-confident he held back. The timid he spurred on with stories of what could be done by even weaklings, if only they would dare. The lazy, the disobedient, the lax who would not or could not train he weeded out; and a few days before the games he told Mr. Sanford that he had a team of boys fit to run for their lives.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MILE RUN

**A**T last the day of the games dawned, as days have had a habit of doing for several years back. The whole school gathered at the station to go with their team to the college town where the games were to be held. There was Mike, wearing a wonderful new Panama, ostentatiously cheerful and full of good stories and funny jokes, as always before a competition. Mr. Sanford was there in white flannels, and Pop Smith, the pop-corn man, a little old man with a long white beard who looked like a gnome and who claimed to be the official mascot of the Cornwall team. Besides these there were several thousand rooters—at least, they sounded like several thousand. Probably, if counted by numbers and not by noise, they would total fifty. Just as the train was about to start, there was a volley of toots, and down the road whirled a



red racer, out of which tumbled old Jim Donegan and Jud Adams.

"I 'm here to see fair play," rumbled the lumber-king.

"Yep," piped up old Jud, to Mike, "I 'm comin' too, in case any of them kids give out and you need a real runner "

Every seat in the vast grandstand which surrounded the college athletic field was filled with rooters from the different schools belonging to the association. As Cornwall High marched on down to their seats, there was a tumult of shouts and laughter from thousands of boys and girls wearing other school colors.

"Now we can start," howled one cheerleader through a megaphone. "The Backwoodsmen are here!"

"Three cheers for the Also-Rans!" yelled another.

"*Rah! Rah! Rah!* for the Tail-Enders!" came from across the field.

"Shut up, you boneheads!" bellowed Jim Donegan, with his face redder than his tie, which was saying a good deal. "We 'll show you some surprises to-day."



"Don't talk back to them," suggested the principal; "you 'll only make them worse."

"They can't be any worse!" howled old Jim. "I *like* to talk back to 'em."

In the stillness of the dressing-rooms the Cornwall team missed all this. The air was heavy with the smell of raw alcohol, with which brawny rubbers massaged the muscles on which so much depended that day. Worried trainers and troubled captains passed back and forth, whispering last words of advice and warning. Here and there could be caught glimpses of boy athletes, all looking a little white and drawn. Some chewed gum, others wore a fixed smile. Some yawned continually, and some shivered as if with a chill as the strain of the weary waiting affected each one of them.

Old Mike wasted very little time in making speeches.

"Lie down, you fellows; keep off your feet and take things easy," he counseled. "You all feel nervous and scared and uncomfortable and as if you can't run worth a cent. That's the way you ought to feel before a race. I



handled Owen the day he first ran under even time in the hundred. Just before the final heat he could n't talk, his teeth chattered so; but he went out and beat the pick of the world. Charlie Kilpatrick could n't eat for two days before the international games between Great Britain and the United States at Manhattan Field in 1895. I had to threaten to lick him to keep him from starvin' to death; yet he went out and beat the other side all to death and broke the world's record in the half-mile. You chaps ain't anything to look at, a homelier bunch I never saw," went on the old man, "but—you're fit to run for your lives and you're going to clean up these city fellows to-day."

So he went on, beguiling the time with many an athletic story, jollyng, joking, encouraging, until his team were as comfortable as could be expected. Suddenly a shrill whistle blew outside. Then a leather-lunged announcer bellowed through a megaphone at the door of the training-house, "All out for the first heat of the hundred!"

Boots Lockwood was the only sprinter in the school who had shown enough speed to be



entered in the dashes. He was a long, gawky, awkward boy with a comical freckled face and always joking. Only Mike, that judge of boys and men, knew what fire and force were hidden in that awkward body.

"Don't hurry," he said craftily. "It'll be five minutes at least before they're ready for this heat. Let the rest of 'em worry out on the track awhile."

Then Sid, the rubber, slapped a big handful of raw alcohol on Boots's sinewy back and suppled up his lithe muscles with a final rub-down. Thrilling all over with the cold tingle of the alcohol, Boots laced on his spiked shoes, and, gripping his new corks, trotted out to join the rest of the entries on the long straight-away, where the dash was to be run. The rest of the waiting team shouted encouragement to him.

"Go to it, old scout!" yelled Captain Bright, from his corner.

"Eat 'em up, Boots!" squealed Bill Darby, who was in the half.

"Show me how to do it," urged Ted Bacon, who was in the next event—the quarter-mile.



Quite different were the remarks that greeted him on the track, where the contestants were waiting for the clerk of the course to finish his roll-call.

"Cornwall 's here; let 's go!" one shouted.

"Don't make him run; *give* him the heat!" yelled another; while even the badged officials found time to smile at the gawky, freckle-faced country boy. None of this made any impression on Boots. He grinned cheerfully at spectators, officials, and competitors alike, although his freckles stood out a little brighter than usual as his face whitened under the strain. He trotted back and forth a few times to limber up, and a moment later found himself lined up in the first heat. There was such a crowded entry that the clerk announced that first place alone would qualify in the finals. This meant hard going for Boots, for, of the other three men, one was Dole, the winner of the year before, while Black, the champion of the Hill School, the largest in the State, had broken the interscholastic record at his school spring games.

"Now—boys—I 'll—tell—you—to—get—



set—and—then—fire—you—off. Any—man—breaking—off—his—mark—before—the—pistol,—goes—back—a—yard,” clattered the starter, jumbling the words together according to the time-honored custom of starters.

Boots drew the outside place. There the going was a little soft, but he did not have a man on each side of him. The champion had the inside position, while next to Boots was the record-breaker from Hill. For a moment the whole place throbbed with the cheers of the different schools, while Boots unconcernedly dug his marks in the cinders with his spiked shoes.

“On your marks!” shouted the starter, and Boots fitted his feet into the little holes which he had dug.

“Get set!” came next.

Remembering the advice of the crafty Mike, who had been one of the greatest of professional sprinters in his day, Boots bent over as slowly as possible, knowing that the starter would not shoot the pistol until every competitor was in place. As he finally put his hands on the ground, fully half a second after



the others, he straightened out his arms and leaped forward from both feet just as the pistol went off. It was a perfect start, and only possible for one who could control his nerves enough to hold back. Like a flash he broke away a good yard ahead of the others. The unexpectedness of being beaten off their marks by an unknown runner flagged the spirits of the others for the tiniest fraction of a second, and sprinting is made up of fractions. At the fifty, Boots was fully six feet ahead of his field. Then the record-holder, who was a wonderful finisher, began steadily to overhaul him, with the other two hard on his shoulder. Holding his breath and running as he had never run before, Boots sped down his lane on the long smooth track, while closer and closer he could hear the *pat-pat* of the speeding feet behind. Ten yards from the finish, the other was almost at his shoulder. Then it was that the boy drew upon the fighting fury which lay within him and which had made him Mike's choice. Calling on every last ounce of reserve speed, and with every atom of nerve and will concentrated on keeping unbroken the swift, rhyth-



mical beat of his stride, he breasted the tape by a tiny fraction of a second ahead of the other. So close had been the finish that the three judges had to confer together before the announcer bellowed to the world at large: "Lockwood, Cornwall High, wins first heat of the hundred! Time, ten flat!"

Boots jogged back to find that the world had changed. There were scattering cheers instead of jeers everywhere, while from the far-away section that had been assigned to the Cornwall High School came a storm of shouts and yells, which always ended with "Boots Lockwood!" Old Mike met him at the start and slapped him joyfully on the back.

"You 're a corker, me boy!" he shouted. "I knew you could do it. You 've killed off the worst in the first heat. The final's a pipe for you."

When Boots came back to the dressing-room, everybody pounded him on the back. The four-forty, as the quarter-mile is termed in cinder-path parlance, came next. It was to be run in one heat, and Billy Darby sallied forth to do or die. Following Mike's direc-



tions, he leaped into the lead at the crack of the pistol, and ran his first hundred yards at sprinting speed, forging far ahead of the field. Unfortunately, he let the excitement of the race run away with his judgment. With a long lead and going strong, it seemed an easy matter to cover the rest of the distance at top speed; but no human legs and lungs have yet been constructed which will allow man or boy to sprint a quarter-mile without slowing up somewhere. Poor Billy turned into the stretch well ahead of the bunch, but here his legs began to wobble, and a red-haired youngster from the Hopkins Grammar School flashed by him, and, almost at the tape, an entry from the Haverford school crowded past him into second place. At any rate he had scored, for first place counted five points, second, two, and third, one.

In the meantime, Buck Whittlesey and Ted Bacon, the biggest and strongest boys at the Cornwall school, had been giving the field a taste of country muscle in the twelve-pound shot. Although neither of them had been able to master the tricky drive of the arm and



the snappy reverse of body and legs which enables a shot-putter to get everything possible into his put, yet by main strength they managed to score three points for the school with a second and third respectively. By this time the final of the hundred had been called, and Boots fulfilled Mike's prophecy and romped away from his field, winning the event by a full yard and scoring five points with a first for Cornwall again in even time. In the two-twenty, the experience and finishing powers of Black of Hill were a little too much for him, and Boots had to be content with second place.

When the pistol cracked for the start of the half-mile, there did not seem to be a chance for Johnnie Morgan, Cornwall's entry, to score a place; but after a game race, he staggered in an unexpected second, adding two more points to Cornwall's mounting score.

The hurdles hurt Cornwall more than any other event. Try as he would, Mike had not been able to teach any of the boys in a single season the hurdle step, which looks so easy and is really so difficult. Hill fattened her score by eleven points in those two events, and



went well into the lead. The high jump was another event which helped Hill and hindered Cornwall. Not a point did her entries score. In the broad jump, Dick Johnstone hit the take-off only once in three tries, but that once carried him over twenty feet and gave Cornwall another second.

It was evident that the fight lay between Hill and Cornwall, and that, in order to win, it would be necessary for Cornwall to score firsts in all of the three remaining events. As the audience realized that the fight was between the largest and the smallest of the entries, a wave of sympathy went out toward Cornwall. Flags flared and fluttered through the different sections everywhere, and there was a storm of cheers and shouts, all ending with "Cornwall!" Above them all, however, could still be heard the shattering "*Brek-ek-kek-kek!*" cheer of the great Hill School, which had sent over a thousand rooters to the games that day. Old Mike, who had been coaching Dick at the jumping-pit, came hurrying in.

"Everybody's yellin' for Cornwall!" he



said. "Everybody wants us to down Hill. We can do it! Now, fellows, a long cheer for Captain Bright, who 's goin' to win the pole-vault; for Joe Couteau, who 's got the five-mile in his pocket; and for good old Freddie Perkins, who 's goin' to end up by takin' first place in the mile! Now all together!"

The little team stood up and gathered around Mike, who was standing on the rubbing-table. Some were covered with the grime and sweat of their races, others were still sick and faint from their efforts. Some had won and others had lost, but all alike joined in the long cheer of the Cornwall High School with the names of the last three competitors at the end. The echoes had hardly died away when the door burst open and in rushed old Jim Donegan, his hat off and his bristling gray hair standing up like the quills of a porcupine. He rushed to the rubbing-table, and, catching up the twelve-pound shot which lay there, banged the long-suffering table for attention.

"Boys," he yelled, "I 'm an old man and I have knocked all around the world and I 've



seen many a grand scrap in my time, but never have I seen such a set of young he-tigers as you fellows are! I 'm proud of every one of you! We 've got these Hill School chaps licked to a frazzle. All we got to do is to win these last three events, an' I 'll tell the world—*we 're goin' to do it!* There ain't nobody can down old Bill Bright or beat out Joe Couteau. They licked a gang of moonshiners, and they 'll just eat up that Hill team. Moreover, I 've got a hunch right now that Freddie Perkins gobbles up the mile. Them 's my sentiments!" and the old man banged the twelve-pound shot down on the table and rushed out again, to yell for Cornwall.

While they were finishing the finals in the high and low hurdles, in neither of which Cornwall had won a place, Will Bright had been vaulting surely and steadily through the preliminary stages of that long-drawn-out event, the pole-vault. At eleven feet, all the competitors had dropped out except Will and an entry from Hopkins and Hill respectively. Once, twice, and three times each of the others essayed the bar, only to fail.



On his first try, Will soared up like a bird, with a perfect take-off. Then, just as he started the arching swing which was to carry him over, there was a splintering crack and the ash pole broke at some hidden flaw about five feet from the end. There was a shout of warning and horror from the spectators as Will's body plunged down headlong toward the jagged point. The boy's quick eye, however, saw his danger even as he fell. With a writhing twist in mid air, he swung his body out toward the landing-pit, just grazing the sharp fragment, which ripped through his jersey, tearing the skin of his left side. Instantly the whole front of his running-shirt was stained with bright red. Half a dozen men rushed to pick him up, but Mike was there first of all.

"Some one get a doctor!" shouted a badged official, bustling up.

"I'm going on," panted Will, recovering his breath, which had been knocked out of him by the fall, "if I can get a pole."

"Say, Cornwall, you're a good sport!" said the defeated Hill entry. "Take my pole.



I 'd rather be beaten by you than anybody I know."

"That 's the talk," said old Mike, heartily, as Will shook hands with his late opponent. "There 's good sporting blood in both of you."

The Hill pole was a built-up bamboo, with the strength and snap of a steel spring. With a good run, Will made a beautiful take-off. Up and up he rose in the air until he was level with the bar. Suddenly he slid his left hand up to his right with a quick snap, and his body arched up and over the bar. His progress back to the dressing-house was a triumph. Half-way back, they met Jim Donegan tearing along toward them, wearing the flowing and resplendent badge of an inspector of the course, which he had inveigled out of the management. His duties, as he understood them, were to run around the field and root early and often for Cornwall, in spite of every attempt on the part of other officials to stop him.

"Five more points!" he chanted ecstatically, patting Will gently on his moist back. "We 've got 'em beat!"



Just as they reached the dressing-house, the five-mile event was announced.

"Go to it, boy!" yelled old Jim to Joe Cou-teau, Cornwall's only entry for that event. "Remember how you used to run down jack-rabbits in the Northwest. Hustle out and tear off five more points for Cornwall."

Joe grinned cheerfully around the circle as he laced on the pair of moccasins which, like that other great Indian distance-runner, Deer-foot, he wore in place of spiked shoes. These moccasins and his dark face made a great sensation.

"Hi! hi!" bellowed the Hill School contingent. "Get on to the Injun, Big Chief, *Woo-woo! Whoo-oo-oo-oo-oo!*" and striking their mouths with their hands, they achieved what they fondly believed to be an Indian war-whoop. Although there were twelve entries, yet the crowd believed that there was only one man in the race. That was Lowell of Haverford, the record-holder who for two years had won the event easily. The only son of an old Boston family, he was much shocked that he should be expected to run



against an Indian. At the end of the first mile he led the bunch by fully fifty yards.

Joe as he passed the starting-post for the fourth time began to increase his speed. One by one he cut down the men ahead of him, and by the time that the fifth quarter was finished he was abreast of the little bunch of five runners who were toiling along nearest the far-away leader. Then without an effort and with a swinging, easy gait he began to go through the field. One or two tried to fight him off, but the steady, even gait which ate up the ground like fire wore them down until he was running second to Lowell, who was now nearly a hundred yards in the lead. At the end of the third mile, Joe had cut this down to thirty yards. As he swung past the starting-post at the beginning of the fifth and last mile, it was as if a mask had suddenly dropped from his impassive face, so keen and eager and confident it showed. The long tireless lope quickened and quickened until Lowell heard the rapid, even *pat-pat* of moccasined feet coming nearer and nearer. Throwing a glance over his shoulder, he



caught sight of the dark face of the Indian surging up beside him. Stung by the sight, he put on a burst of speed and for a hundred yards or so drew away well ahead of his opponent. Joe kept on unconcernedly with the same swinging, even gait. Without looking at his opponent, he seemed far more interested in the shouting, cheering crowds in the grandstand.

Soon the approaching beat of the moccasins stung Lowell to a new effort, which for a moment carried him out of ear-shot. Yet even as he slackened his speed, the sound of the flying feet behind him came relentlessly nearer and nearer, until the Indian's even breathing was at his shoulder. Again he spurted, but it was a last effort, and in a few moments Joe was once more and for the last time abreast of him. As they ran neck and neck, the two were in strange contrast. Lowell's face was wrinkled and drawn as he strained every nerve and muscle to hold his place, while the Indian, with his effortless gait, seemed to regard his exhausted rival with an amused curiosity. At the end of another lap the Indian quickened



his even stride and took the lead, drawing away from his opponent with every beat of his moccasined feet. Again and again Lowell spurted gallantly; and though now and then he gained some of his lost distance, the gap between himself and the leader kept widening. On the last lap Joe cut loose and covered the distance at almost sprinting speed, finishing fully half a lap ahead of Lowell and breaking the tape and the record at the same time. Then, to show how little the race had taken out of him, he kept on for an extra lap, cheered to the echo by every section in turn as he passed. Even the Hill delegation gave the little dark record-breaker a tremendous send-off.

Cornwall had scored twenty-four points to twenty-five for Hill, and a roar of shouts and cheers swept across the field. Everything depended on the last race of the day—the mile-run. The Hill delegation, in spite of the frantic efforts of four fat policemen, surged out and dragged across the track their mascot, a reluctant bull pup wearing the Hill colors, thereby throwing an exceeding baneful hoo-



doo on all the entries save those of Hill. Not to be outdone, Cornwall pulled little Pop Smith across the same part of the track, kicking and squealing and struggling while his long white beard waved in the wind. Haverford had a band. So did Hill. Likewise Hopkins. And these bands played and tooted and fided and shrilled and drummed and made every kind of noise that ever tortured the eardrums of mankind. For fully fifteen minutes the pandemonium kept up, until the policemen and all of the officials, except one gray-haired inspector of the course, were worn out in their attempts to restore order.

Only in the Cornwall dressing-room was there silence. Mike himself gave Fred a final rub-down, and every man on the team crowded around to pat him on the back and shake his hand and wish him luck. It was a very cold hand, clammy with the weary terror of waiting that frets into the courage of the bravest. Fred's eyes, however, had a steady fire in them, and his face, although white, was set as steel.

"It's up to you, my boy," was all Mike said.

"I'll do my best, Mike," returned Fred,



very quietly. Just then the door opened and in burst Mr. Sanford, quite different from the dignified principal of the Cornwall High School whom the boys saw every day. His hat was gone, his face was nearly as red as Jim Donegan's, and his tousled hair stood up like the crest of a cockatoo. He hurried up to Freddie, panting as if he himself had just come from a race. In one hand he held two battered, scarred running-corks, in one of which was a large round hole.

"Freddie," he said, "these are my old mascot running-corks. I've carried them in nearly a hundred races. They're yours now. Squeeze 'em hard and bring back the championship to old Cornwall to-night. That round hole," he went on, "is for the middle finger of your right hand. Sink your nail into it deep when you see the tape in sight."

Johnnie Morgan was to run with Fred as a team-mate. As the two came out of the training-house, they stepped into a very tempest of sound. All the cheering before was like a whisper to the hoarse roars that swept back and forth across the little arena. Moran,



the Hill miler,—slight and beautifully built, with a mocking, resolute face,—although not a record-holder, had won the event the year before in fast time. He was older than most of the other boys, and for two years had run on the team of a city athletic club. He had undoubtedly more experience than any other entry there. The Cornwall entries had planned to have Morgan set the pace, keeping it slow enough to allow Fred's sprint to have a chance in the straight.

As the pistol cracked, John dashed across from the outside and took the lead. Unfortunately for Fred, Moran was an old hand at racing, and when he saw Morgan slow down his pace, jumped at once to the conclusion that the other Cornwall entry wanted to save himself for the finish. Racing up, he passed John and, taking the pole, skimmed down the back-stretch at a tremendous clip. With a sprint, Cornwall's second string again won the lead as they neared the end of the first lap, but lost it the minute he tried to slow the pace. As they whirled past the starting-post in a bunch, Fred himself tried to set the pace, hop-



ing to slow it down. Yet hardly had he slackened a little, when Moran went past him with a rush. It was evident that he intended to make a runaway race of it from the very start and would take no chances in the home-stretch. Fred set his teeth grimly and buckled down to the task of following his pace.

At the end of the half-mile Morgan dropped out. Moran still kept the lead, with Fred just back of him, while right behind Fred were the Haverford and Hopkins entries, running craftily, hoping that the leaders might run themselves off their feet before the finish. For the third time the first four swept past the starting-post, and began the bitter third quarter, that quarter which tests the very soul of a racer, when the ache of the distance makes the taxed muscles and the flagging brain alike cry for rest, with the finish still a weary way off. Moran quickened his pace a little, and Fred strained every muscle to hold his place. His chest felt as if bound with a choking iron band, and his legs began to acquire that strange, numb feeling which is the protest of sorely taxed muscles.



Now it was that the long, tiresome cross-country runs of the winter showed their effect. Back of all his exhaustion, Fred still had the feeling of something in reserve. Yet every stride seemed to rack his very vitals, and the numbness seemed to be stealing from his legs to his brain. Suddenly a great gong clanged. The leader had passed the starting-post and was beginning the last lap. The sound seemed to tap new reserves of energy in Fred's lithe body, and he found himself plunging forward faster and faster as they whirled around the first curve into the back-stretch. At last came the final turn, and under a thunder of cheers the two turned into the back-stretch and quickened their speed.

Just then from behind with a rush came up the Hopkins entry. On the outside he passed Fred and challenged Moran, who had drawn away a yard or so ahead. Neck and neck he raced with him down the stretch, but, with the finish still twenty yards away, suddenly plunged headlong, his laboring body unable to stand the strain which the untimely sprint had imposed upon it. He fell right across



Moran's path, and the latter had to swerve out to avoid tripping over him. This was Fred's chance. With a staggering plunge he shot forward on the inside, and in another second was running neck and neck with the leader. Only ten yards of terrible struggle lay between them and the thin red thread that marked the goal where the impassive judges and the timers, with stop-watches held aloft, stood. Fred's legs seemed made of lead. All of his speed at the finish seemed to have been drained by the tremendous pace. Bright flashes darted before his eyes, while the shouts of the spectators seemed to come from afar.

"Come on, Freddie! Come in! Come in, Cornwall!" he heard faintly. Moran led by an inch at the last yard, and both boys, with hot, misty eyes, saw ahead of them the thin red thread which seemed to waver and move backward. Gripping the mascot corks, Fred's finger sank into the deep hole, and the feeling called him back to himself for the fraction of a second. Setting his teeth and gripping his corks until his knuckles showed white, he drew upon the last tiny fragment of reserve



power which he had left, and at the end of the last stride threw himself through the air like a diver. Even as he plunged unconscious, he felt the blessed pressure of the thread as it broke against his breast, a tiny inch before Moran's up-raised foot. Then the arms of Mike and Donegan were around him as they carried him back to the dressing-room.

"I knew it was in you. *I* knew," old Mike said, but his voice broke even as he spoke.

It seemed a long time after, although it was only a few minutes, when Freddie opened his eyes again. The first thing he saw were the admiring faces of Will and Joe. The first thing he heard was Will's whisper:

"You're going with us after the Blue Pearl!"



## CHAPTER III

### OUTWARD BOUND

**A**T last dawned the day when the Argonauts sailed away toward the sunset, like the crew that Jason captained when the world was young. Instead of the *Argo*, Cornwall's Argonauts voyaged in the super-parlor-Pullman-observation-private car *Esmerelda*, which belonged to Mr. Donegan, and which, through him, had been attached to the great Transcontinental Express. By reason, too, of Mr. Donegan, that celebrated train for the first time in its history would stop at Cornwall. Theretofore it had never even hesitated when it passed through.

Everybody came to see them off. Strangely enough, too, every one from Chief Selectman Jimmy Wadsworth down to Jed Bunker, who tramped the town making baskets, knew that they were going pearling and when and where and how. Myron Prindle had inside infor-



mation that they were bound for the "Spanish Main." He was not sure just where said Main might be, but presumed that it was somewhere in Spain. Anyway, he knew that it was full of pearls and pirates and that Mr. Donegan had chartered a schooner which Joe Couteau was to captain. The fact that Joe did n't know a schooner from a gondola made no difference. *Myron knew.* Uncle Riley Rexford was just as positive that they were going after fresh-water pearls along the banks of the Yukon. He also had inside information. Mat Platt, the village dressmaker, was absolutely certain that they were bound for the South Seas. She had been told so by some one who knew all about it. She wished she could tell who it was, but she had promised she would n't. Jessalie Jones, who wrote poetry, and had it printed under the initials "J. J." in the Litchfield County Gazette, had it on good authority that the whole trip had something to do with a romance of Jud Adams' youth. She refused to give her authority. In one thing all the stories agreed. That was—Pearls! Miss Jane Bronson, who



had taught drawing and English literature at the Cornwall High School from a time beyond which the memory of man runneth not, brought in Volume 15 of the Encyclopædia Britannica—P-Q—of the vintage of 1860. She whispered that it contained a masterly monograph on pearls which she hoped the boys would find time to read on their trip. Guinea Potter's mother brought a bottle of boneset-tea which she had brewed herself and which could be used either inside or outside and was warranted to cure everything that could be cured. It was a favorite Cornwall remedy and always very effective, probably because it had such an appalling taste that any one who swallowed a dose of it would forget everything else. Old Hen Root, who lived over in the Hollow, and who had come to Cornwall from Saugatuck on Long Island Sound, brought a clam-hoe down to the station, which he insisted upon presenting to Will.

"It may come in handy," he remarked confidentially, "in case you want to get a mess of *oysters*."



The Cornwall Horse Guards were there ready for the worst, and would have been very impressive, if Silas Ford's horse had not balked right on the railroad tracks. As it was nearly train-time, the rest of the guard tried to haul him off by main force. The Cornwall Band chose that particular moment to break loose. They tooted and banged and shrilled and squealed, until it sounded as if a boiler factory had blown up. At the very first explosion, Silas Ford's horse, which had been bracing his feet and holding back with at least ten horse-power, whisked his tail, cleared the tracks, and was off down the road like a cyclone. As most of the other horses of the guards were hitched to him, the whole squadron disappeared around the corner in a cloud of dust and a confusion of "*Whoas!*" At that moment a distant whistle was heard, and with a rushing roar, the rumble of mighty wheels and the hissing of sorely tried air-brakes, the majestic Transcontinental Express whirled around the curve and came to a full stop. Then it was that Fred's mother, who was a widow, broke down. As she kissed her



boy good-by she was suddenly convinced that neither pearls nor prospects were worth the unknown risks of this far journey.

"Don't go, honey. Stay home with me," she whispered. "I may never see you again."

It was a critical moment. Fred winked very hard and wondered whether, after all, the trip was worth while. It was Barbara Deering who made a diversion. Barbara had violet eyes, a mouth that turned up at the corners and a voice that always made Fred think of the gurgling of a trout-brook. Moreover, one could never be certain as to just what Barbara was going to do next—which added to her attractiveness. To-day she had stood in a group of girls with her hands behind her as the good-bys were being said, and, at this critical moment, stepped forward with a great bunch of those rare rose-red orchids, the mocasin-flower. She had gone five miles to find them before breakfast. These she handed to Fred and whispered so low that only he could hear, "Good-by; I'm *very* proud of you!" After that any backing out was impossible. Will's father shook hands with him with that



indifference which fathers and sons show in public. Joe Couteau's uncle was there with a package of the whitest, sweetest maple sugar in the world, which only the old charcoal-burner knew how to make in his little sugar-bush in the early spring.

"You big fool to go," he murmured affectionately, pressing the package into Joe's hands. "Hurry up and come back."

Then Mr. Sanford and old Mike and Buck Masters, the village constable who had helped rescue Will and Joe from the burning cabin, and Uncle Riley Rexford, and Nathan Hart, the letter-carrier, with a mail-bag in his hand, and Virgil Jones the postmaster, and half a score of others pressed forward to shake the boys' hands and wish them luck. Only old Jud Adams stood apart from the rest of the crowd.

"Ain't there no one who 's goin' to give me flowers or sugar nor nothin'?" he complained.

"Sure there be!" shouted old Jim Donegan, who had arrived late, as usual, pushing his way through the crowd, red-hot with haste and excitement. "Even if none of these good-



lookin' girls will give you anything, I will. You 're all the time complainin' that you can't find any smokin' tobacco in Cornwall that's got any taste to it. I 've sent down South and here 's a package of black perique that will just about take the top of your old gray head off," and Big Jim shook the old trapper's hand affectionately and slapped the boys on their backs.

"Good-by, fellows," he shouted as if he were hailing a ship at sea. "Good luck! I wish I were goin' with you instead of this good-for-nothin' old cripple of a Jud Adams."

"What do you mean by such talk, Jim Donegan?" yelled Jud, clutching his perique in one hand and much incensed at this public reference to his age. "Thank ye for the tobacco, but when you come to talk about me bein' old, I want you to understand—" but just then the whistle shrilled impatiently, the majestic conductor, who had been regarding Cornwall tolerantly, swept back the crowd, the porter pushed the boys, clam-hoe, encyclopædia, boneset-tea, and all into the car, and with another bang from the band the Argonauts of



Cornwall were off. With a shriek of the whistle which echoed through the hills, the train whirled away toward the enchantments, the adventures, and the waiting lands which, since Time began, have always beckoned to Argonauts from beyond the sunset.

Then came long and varied days of sight-seeing from the observation platform. At first, Jud insisted upon shaking hands with the head waiter whenever they went into the dining-car, much to that dignitary's embarrassment, and always gave the conductor a military salute as a tribute to his blue and brass uniform. The library, the baths, the brass bedsteads, the great leather-lined lounging chairs, and all the other equipment of a plutocratic private car were a source of never-ending delight and amusement to the old trapper. Most of all, however, the whole crowd enjoyed the observation platform at the rear of the car. There, tipped back in comfortable chairs, with their feet up on the brass rail, as cities, prairies and mountains whirled by, they would talk by the hour, and old Jud would spin them yarns about the buffalo herds, the



Indians and the antelope which he saw on his first trip across the continent in the seventies.

"Joe," said Will, one day, after one of Jud's yarns, "you've never told me how you managed to come across the continent. Where did you live first, and how did you get East by yourself?"

For a long minute Joe made no answer, but sat and watched the steel rails spin a shining track behind them across the golden wheat-fields of Dakota.

"I lived," he said at last, "on the Island of Akotan. That mean 'Island of the Free People' in my talk," he explained. "My father was a French trapper, who joined our tribe and married my mother. I told you 'bout his being killed by bear," he went on, turning to Will, who nodded as he remembered the talks around the camp-fire that he and Joe used to have when they were winning the cabin for the Cornwall Scouts. "After that," went on Joe, "my mother take me one day across to the mainland where there was a mission-school. She tell me if anything happen to her, I was to leave the tribe and go to



this school. When I learned enough, I was to travel and travel and travel east until I found my father's brother. She gave me writing, which my father had left, which showed how to find him." Then Joe came to a stop and looked long into the distance. "My mother's uncle, he Shuman of the Free People," he went on after a moment.

"Is that the same as the Chief?" inquired Fred.

"No," said Joe, "Shuman is higher than Chief. There may be two or more Chiefs but only one Shuman. Chiefs look after everyday things, but Shuman he say when there be war or peace, he medicine-man for tribe, and have charge of all big things. After my mother's uncle find Pearl he go on long, long journey south to place where the Free People had come from a hundred of years before. He want to see the Great Ones, and learn how to keep his people free and brave and good. While he gone, my mother die, like I tell you," said Joe, turning to Will, who nodded without speaking. The Indian boy's eyes flashed and his hands clinched hard for a moment.



"When I come back," he went on after a long pause, "and found she had died and my uncle gone and other chiefs trying to take his place, who would n't dared have spoken to him standing up, I tell tribe what I thought. No one answer me back. Then I take canoe and provisions and gun and leave 'em all and paddle and paddle and walk and walk until I come to where mission-school was. There I stay and learn to read and write and be like white boys."

"Did they send you across to your father's uncle?" questioned Jud, much interested.

"No," said Joe after a long pause, "they not have the money to do that."

"Well, who did send you?" persisted Jud.

"*Cheesay*," responded the boy, finally.

"*Cheesay!*" exclaimed Jud. "That's the Chippewa for lucivee."

"You mean the Canada lynx," broke in Will.

"Yes," responded the old man. "I call 'em lucivees, and the French trappers call 'em *loup-cervier*, but their name in Chippewa is '*cheesay*.'"



"Tell us how the lynx sent you," begged Fred, who had been sitting an interested listener to the whole conversation. Joe hesitated a moment.

"Well, it was this way," he said. "I want to be like white boys. My mother's people cowards and dogs to let her starve. My uncle gone. I remember she tell me to go back to my father's people. At the mission-school they tell me it take much money—two, three hundred dollars—to travel down to Sitka and take boat and railroad out East. They not have any money. I not have any money. So I start out to earn my fare by trapping. At first I not have very good luck. I trap and trap and hunt and hunt, but catch very little."

"It's a wonder you caught anythin'," interjected Jud. "Trappin's no game for kids. It takes a grown man with good brains and a lot of experience to be a real trapper," and Jud puffed out his chest consciously.

Joe looked at the little old man quizzically. "Yes," he said at last, "it takes fine, big, handsome, smart man to be good trapper—like old man Jud, but I did the best I could. I caught



a few muskrat and once in a while a mink, but they hardly brought enough to pay for my traps and my grub and my ammunition. Then one day there came a heavy snow. It snow and snow until ground covered three feet deep. I start out one morning with my gun to follow up trap-route. Pretty soon out from the woods I come to fox-trail."

"How do you tell a fox-trail?" asked Fred.

"Tracks like those of dog," explained Joe, "except they run in straight line and don't spraddle out like dog and are finer and clearer cut and never show any drag-mark on the snow, for fox lift his paw high while dog sometimes drag it. This trail," went on Joe, "showed that the fox had sunk deep, every jump. He seemed to be running hard, and once in a while I could see mark of his brush on snow, showing that he was tired; for while he is fresh, a fox never lets his brush touch the snow. I wonder at first why fox go so fast when snow so deep. At last I see the reason. Near the fox-trail runs a line of big, padded cat-tracks, about twice the size of ordinary cat. Only they don't show four toes



like cat-track does. I knew then that it was trail of cheesay."

"What made them padded?" inquired Will.

"A lynx wears snow-shoes in the winter," interposed Jud, before Joe had a chance to answer. "Each toe is covered with a big ball of fluffy hair which spreads out nearly flat, so that a lynx can bound over the snow, hardly sinking in at all."

"That 's what this one was doing," went on Joe. "At every jump he would go five or six feet and only sink in a few inches, while the fox went floundering through the snow up to his shoulders. The tracks zigzagged in and out through the trees, as if the old fox was trying to dodge, and once in a while he 'd make a stand against some tree, but always the lynx would drive him out into the open again. At last they led to little lake all frozen over and covered level with snow, and there out in the middle I saw two animals fighting. I hurried up close on my snow-shoes, and just as I got there, cheesay gave big jump in air and clipped Old Man Fox right over head with



his claws and buried him in the snow. Before he could get out, old lynx landed on top of him and bite him through the neck and kill him. By that time I was right close to them, and I yell loud to drive lynx off before he rip up fox's fur. Cheesay very much surprised, give a jump away, and spit and yowled and crouched and pretended that he was going to spring at me. My gun was loaded, and nobody ever afraid of Old Man Cheesay, anyhow. I look down at fox, and what you suppose I saw?"

"What?" chorused the rest of the party.

"Silver fox!" exclaimed Joe, impressively. "Black, black as night, and soft and thick and heavy. The longest hairs were tipped with white, so that the fur looked as if it were all frosted with silver, while the big jet-black brush had a silver tip."

"Oh, boy!" broke in Jud. "Think of that luck! I trapped nigh on to twenty years before I got a silver fox, and then he was n't a very good one."

"Well," went on Joe, "they told me at the



school that this one was the best silver fox that had ever been turned in there. They gave me three hundred dollars for it."

"Which was about a third of what it was worth," commented Jud.

"It was enough to take me to Cornwall, anyway," finished Joe.

"Did n't you get the lynx skin, too?" inquired Fred.

Joe looked at him reprovingly. "That just like white man," he said at last; "always selfish and ungrateful. When animal make present to Indian, Indian remember it and play square with animal. That why Indian so much better hunter and trapper than white man and get so much more game. Cheesay he give me black fox; he send me across continent; he bring me back to my father's people. You think for that I kill cheesay? No!" and Joe regarded the abashed Fred sternly. "I take out my knife and skin fox right there in snow, while cheesay wait and watch me. Then I give him carcass. He say, 'Thank you,' and I leave him and never kill another lynx and never will."



"That's the reason," exclaimed Will, "that you never helped me the time that old lynx jumped over me and scratched me up when we were out winning the cabin for the Cornwall scouts! I never understood why you didn't clip him one when I missed him, but now I see the reason."

Joe nodded silently.

"How did the old lucivee say thank you?" inquired Fred, inquisitively.

Joe opened his mouth wide and gave a long, low "*Meow*," followed in quick succession by half a dozen others, each one rising in pitch and volume, and the whole ending with three terrific screeches which brought the porter, the waiter, and even the majestic conductor himself running from the car ahead. It was the yowl song of the mating lynx, and it came so suddenly that Fred and Will almost tipped over backward in their chairs. Only old Jud was unmoved. He regarded the imperturbable Joe admiringly.

"You sure have got that lucivee love-song down fine," he said. "I'd have sworn that when you gave that good loud piercing yowl



there was an old bobcat in this car if I had n't seen you do it."

"If that 's the way Old Man Bobcat talks when he 's grateful," said Fred, "I 'd hate to hear him when he 's mad."

After the train officials had become convinced that no murder was being done and had retired, Will was moved to a reminiscence himself anent silver foxes.

"There was a boy named Bill Peebles," he began, "who once lived in Cornwall, over on Dibble Hill. He went to the High School a couple of terms or so and then his folks moved away. Peebles was quite a hunter, and one day in November he climbed Pond Hill, thinking that he might get a shot at a deer up in the old sheep-pasture at the top. As he was coming out of the edge of the woods, all of a sudden he saw a jet-black fox just ahead of him. The wind was blowing from the fox, and so it had n't heard him or scented him at all. Peebles crouched down in the bushes and cocked his rifle and drew a careful bead on the fox about fifty yards away. He was just going to press the trigger," went on Will,



dramatically, "when out of a corner of his eye he saw something move over on the edge of the woods, and out into the pasture stepped a fine buck, just about the same distance away as the fox. Old Sport Peebles was up in the air. First he sighted at the fox and then he sighted at the buck. He could shoot one, but he sure could n't get the other. At last, he figured out that the buck was bigger, and so he aimed carefully and dropped it in its tracks with a bullet just back of the fore shoulder. At the first crack of the rifle, the fox was gone. Bill Peebles got home with the buck, but when his folks found that he had let a thousand-dollar silver fox escape, they came near taking his gun away from him."

"I should think they would," snorted Jud. "Any Cornwall boy over seven ought to know that a black fox is the most valuable fur in the world, bar one."

"What 's the one?" asked Fred.

"Kahlan," said Jud.

"What 's a kahlan?"

"Bo-bear."

"Come again," said Fred.



"Well, sea-otter then," said Jud, "since you 're so ignorant. I suppose a good one now would bring pretty nigh ten thousand dollars, while a silver fox might get as high as five thousand."

"Me for the sea-otter!" exclaimed Will. "I did n't know that there was such an expensive animal on earth. Well, anyway, coming back to Bill Peebles, he moved, soon after that happened, and I don't know what became of him, but I never saw a boy so sorry over anything. If he lives to be a hundred, he 'll never stop regretting that black fox."

As the train sped across the plains and into the country beyond, Jud became much excited. Towns and cities he remembered as trading-stations, cattle-depots and mining-camps. Then one evening the train rumbled into Spokane, and Jud was full of reminiscences.

"Do you see that stone shed?" he inquired, pointing to a tumble-down building not far from the station. "Well, boys, the last time I was here that was a smoke-house. There was n't any railroad and there was n't any city. Where these tracks run was a stage route.



There were twenty-five or thirty houses and dance-halls and a hotel called San Francisco House. It was about fifty yards away from that smoke-house."

The old man paused dramatically.

"Go on, Jud," urged Will, "let's have the story of the smoke-house."

"Yes, Jud," chimed in Fred, "I'll believe it if it kills me."

The old man regarded him sternly.

"You'll get into trouble some of these days, young fellow," he said austerely, "with your fresh insinuhendoes," and he eyed him severely. Fred bowed his head meekly.

"Go on, boss," he murmured contritely. With a few indignant puffs, old Jud resumed his interrupted story.

"In the stage along with us," he went on, "was an Englishman. He wore a long plaid ulster that would have made Joseph's coat look faded, an' a round, shiny piece of glass seemed to have grown into one of his eyes. We tried to draw the critter out just for the fun o' hearin' him talk, for he kind o' bleated an' used funny soundin' words. At last he shut



up like a clam, an' we most forgot him. It was gettin' toward dark when we stopped to change horses at the San Francisco House. Spokane was an awful rough place in those days," and Jud stopped to charge his pipe afresh with some of Big Jim's perique. "All of a sudden," he resumed after a series of quick puffs, like a freight-engine starting, "we saw that Britisher walkin' off by himself with his hands in his pockets, as unconcerned as if he were in London. Just as he got opposite that smoke-house, a big chap jumps out from behind it, shoves a gun into his face, an' wants his money quick. The Englishman looked so funny an' helpless with his mouth open an' that eye-glass an' ulster, that even the hold-up man could n't keep from grinnin'. Before we could get to them, there was a shot fired, an' who do you suppose went down?"

"The tourist, of course," said Will.

"That 's what we thought," responded Jud; "but when we got there, it was the hold-up man who was lyin' on his face an' the Englishman standin', with his hands still in his pockets, starin' down at him out of that glass



eye of this. Come to find out, he carried a short Derringer revolver; an' instead of puttin' up his hands, he 'd shot right through his coat. It was kind of expensive, but mighty effective. He got the robber right through the shoulder," finished Jud, "an' he was the most surprised hold-up man you ever saw. When we turned him over to the sheriff, he said it had served him right for trustin' to appearances."

It was not until toward the end of the trip that a hotbox gave Fred a chance to distinguish himself. The train had been whirling at full speed across a wide plateau, when it came to a sudden stop with much crashing and clanking and wheezing of air-brakes. The Argonauts hurried out, to find that it would take over an hour to repair damages. Glad of a chance to stretch their legs, they started to explore a dry, sandy plain studded with bunches of coarse grass. As they passed one of the grass-clumps, there sounded in front of them a deep, fierce hiss. Close by Jud's foot, the bloated, swollen body of a fearsome snake upreared itself. It was almost white in



color, blotched and spotted with bands and streaks of velvety brown, and each scale had a little ridge running down its center. The snake's snout was turned upward in a sharp, curved horn, and its black, lidless eyes seemed to flash as the hideous head flattened until it was nearly as wide as the palm of Joe's hand. As the scales on the snake's neck opened out, they showed the golden-yellow skin between, until the serpent's head and neck seemed all aflame as it struck out toward them, a picture of blind, venomous rage. As it struck, the snake hissed loud enough to be heard a hundred feet away. Jud probably broke the world's record for the standing back broad-jump. Will said afterward that he sailed through the air like a bird.

"Keep away, boys," Jud shouted. "Somebody get a stick or a stone. That's a sand-viper, and he's pizener than a rattlesnake. Don't let his breath touch you. It's nigh as bad as his bite!"

Will and Joe needed no warning. Neither one of them knew much about snakes, and their one experience with the timber rattle-



snake in their adventures in the woods had given them a profound distrust of all snake-kind. Then it was that Fred came to the front. Snakes were his specialty. Waving the rest of them back with a noble gesture, he strode right up to the infuriated serpent.

"Get back, boy, he 'll kill you!" piped Jud from the far background.

Fred not only did not retreat, but actually stretched out his hand, palm up, toward the sharp-curved snout of the bloated snake. With a tremendous hiss, the infuriated reptile apparently struck him violently on the flat of his hand. None of the spectators, however, noticed that the snake's mouth was tight shut. A gasp of horror came from Jud, while Joe and Will prepared to interfere.

"You thought he bit me that time," said Fred, turning to them. "It only shows that the hand is quicker than the eye."

"Don't be a fool, Fred," interposed Will. "He 'll get you next time."

"There 's no danger," returned Fred, pompously. "I 've a charm which will make this snake kill himself and then come to life."



Before the boys could stop him, he stretched out his right hand and tapped the snake several times on the sharp end of his up-curved snout, muttering some unintelligible words at the same time. It was as he said. The bloated serpent stopped hissing, and, turning over and over, seemed to writhe in terrible agony. Finally, it pulled a coil of its twisting body through its wide open jaws, and, with a few convulsive shudders, stretched itself out with its black-striped, white belly upward, apparently dead. There was a murmur of admiration from the rest of the party.

"How did you do it, Fred?" queried Will.

"That kid really has got somethin' to him," muttered Jud, while even Joe was inclined to believe that Fred had stumbled on some bit of the Indian magic in which, in spite of his white training, he firmly believed.

"That 's nothing," said Fred, patronizingly. "Step back behind that bush, and in a moment or so I 'll bring him to life."

Stretching both hands palm up toward the sky, he made a few mystic gestures over the



motionless snake and then joined the others behind the bush. One, two, three full minutes passed. Suddenly a shudder passed through the motionless body of the snake. Then its head was raised slightly from the ground and it peered all around. Seeing no one in sight, it flopped over and started to wriggle its way into the grass, when Fred rushed out and secured it. The boys and Jud were vastly impressed.

"I never believed it was in you," said Jud, as, from a safe distance, he regarded the snake, which was now peacefully coiled around Fred's arm.

"Tell us the charm," demanded Will.

"Well," said Fred, "if you fellows would study any good book on snakes, you'd find all the charm you need there. You'd read there that this is the puff-adder, or hog-nose snake, or sand-viper, as Jud calls it, or spreading-adder or blow-snake or flat-headed adder, for it goes by all these names. You would also find out that it ought to be called the bluff-adder. It never bites. It never opens its



mouth when it strikes. It tries to scare people, but it's really a gentle, harmless, well-behaved snake."

There was a long pause.

"It don't look it," said Jud.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FREE PEOPLE

**A**T last and at last the continent was crossed. At the end of the longest wharf in Port Townsend, on Puget Sound, the Argonauts met Captain Nord of the timber-tug *Bear*, the staunchest of all of Mr. Donegan's lumber-fleet. The captain had cruised and prospected for timber, gold, furs, copper, fossils, and everything else that meant money, from Puget Sound clear to Point Barrow in the Arctic Ocean, and knew the far Northwest as well as any living white man. He was short, thick-set, and silent, with a smooth-shaven face, a mouth that shut like a trap, and wintry blue eyes, which could flash like steel on occasion. Big Jim had written the captain full directions, and he had made ready for the party a complete equipment which included food, ammunition, clothes, and two of the best canoes that money could



buy, since the last part of the trip had to be under paddle-power.

Followed long days and weeks as the little steamer plowed its way through the North Pacific Ocean until they reached the little island of Attoo, the last and loneliest island of all the Aleutian group. Jud knew the place, for he had been there many years ago to trap blue foxes.

"We 're gettin' into the sunset!" he said, as the island loomed into sight. "You fellows think that San Francisco is far west. Attoo is three thousand miles west of that. It's the westernmost land in North America."

From Attoo they zigzagged northward in and out among islands large and small. Some had snow-covered peaks which towered far up into the sky, or showed smoking volcanoes or crystal glaciers which flowed down their sides like rivers of ice. Others were flat and bare and barren. Back and forth the little steamer circled and doubled through blue-green and whitish-gray waters and always among a maze of islands ranging from large ones many miles across down to those which were hardly more



than barren rocks set in lonely seas, surf-beaten and tempest-swept. Among them all the *Bear* kept steadily onward, circling and doubling through labyrinthine passages and across uncharted sounds and little bays. Past them, at times, floated vast icebergs, snow-white, with blue veins running through them, which contrasted with the deep reds, warm grays, and rich browns and yellows of the granite and sandstone cliffs, while beyond them was the gleam of soft green grass or the steel-blue of glacier ice. Then came a morning of that crystalline clearness which only dawns in the far North, and they could see looming up against the horizon a vast island, separated from them by a mass of reefs and rocks and islets. It showed black against the blue water, and a white coverlet thrown across its dark form showed where a range of snow-covered mountains ran.

"This is as far as I go," announced Captain Nord. "You fellows will have to make the rest of the trip in the canoes. I'd pile up the old steamer on the reefs if I went any nearer. That's Akotan. They say that it's a wild,



fierce place where no white men have ever been, and I certainly hate to let you kids go in there alone."

Joe, who had been leaning on the rail staring raptly at the island, spoke up.

"No fear," he said. "The Free People live there. They not hurt any one who I bring."

"The Free People?" questioned the captain. "What are they? I've lived with Innuits and Aleuts and Kadiakers and Koloshes. Are they any of them?"

"Koloshes are biting dogs," returned Joe, scornfully. "Kadiakers are stupider than sea-lions. Innuits are children who never think alike twice, and the Aleuts are sheep. But the Free People, the Free People are *men!*"

A few minutes later the two canoes were launched, the equipment stored away in them, and Joe and Will prepared to take their place in one, while Jud and Fred followed in the other.

"Two months from to-day," said the captain, "I'll be back. There's a mission-station over there on Kadiak Island about ten miles from here. Jud knows the place. I'll



call for you there—and I hope I find you!” he added in an undertone.

There was a chorus of farewells from the crew, four paddles struck the water together, and the Argonauts were on the last lap of their journey. Half an hour later a trail of smoke on the horizon was all that they could see of the *Bear*. The hours passed as they paddled their way among the crowded islets through a landlocked sound guarded by snow-covered mountains whose tops touched the sky and down whose sides the melting snow ran in hundreds of little cataracts. As the streams, clear as crystal and cold as winter, dashed into the green-and-blue sound the fresh water showed white as milk. On the adventurers went through the sullen grandeur of mountain peaks and the dread of smoking volcanoes. Sometimes they were tangled in a maze of rocks and reefs through which the water swirled in dangerous tide-rips. Yet always Joe brought them through unerringly by safe channels and calm courses. Some of the hidden dangers of those treacherous waters, however, they could not avoid. Toward the



end of the morning, after they had passed out of the sound into a bay beyond, the smooth glassy water suddenly broke into foam all around them. A moment later it was flecked with white-caps and boiled and bubbled in a tangle of currents which tossed the light canoes like chips here and there.

"Look out!" shouted Joe. "Paddle away from shore!"

For a time it seemed as if both canoes were trapped in the sudden mesh of surging waters which threatened to engulf them or drive them on one of the near-by reefs. For half an hour they paddled desperately toward the open sea, but without being able to escape the clutch of the surging waters. Little by little the raging currents dragged them shoreward and nearer to the black fangs of the waiting reef. Suddenly, when they were almost exhausted by the sustained burst of paddling, the roaring tangle of currents and whirlpools smoothed themselves out, the waves went down, and the little bay lay calm and smiling as before.

"Whew!" grunted Will, wiping the sweat



from his forehead. "What was that, anyway?"

"That sea-puss," responded Joe, panting, as he leaned on his paddle. "Sometimes current shifts and runs against tide and makes sea-puss. It never lasts very long."

"It lasted long enough for me," gasped Fred, from the rear canoe. "I was pretty nearly all in."

"Yes," joined in Jud, "I 'd never make a pet of these sea-pusses! Me for a gentler breed."

Beyond the bay where the fierce puss from the sea had tried to claw them, they paddled on through the panorama of sea and sky and mountain which unfolded before them as they passed island after island. Suddenly the silence was broken by a bellow from the practical Jud.

"Hey, Chief!" he yelled, "when do we eat? I have n't had anything since 1812. This scenery 's fine, but it ain't very fillin'."

"In few minutes now," called back Joe. "We land soon for lunch."

"Can't be too soon for me," grumbled Jud.



Followed another stretch of paddling, and then before their delighted eyes broke into view a little islet more beautiful than anything that the boys had ever seen before. Compared with the group of barren, rocky, reef-bound islands in which it was set, it seemed like a green oasis of that lonely northern sea. Less than half a mile across, in its midst towered a peak broken into cliffs and ledges of many-colored rock.

"This Half-Way Island," explained Joe, as the canoes grounded on a hard white beach. "It half-way between Akotan and main chain of islands."

"It looks good to me!" shouted Fred, as they scrambled ashore with the hamper of provisions, after beaching the canoes beyond the high-water mark. Joe led them to a little pocket of soft green grass which stretched out from the slope of the cliff and through which flowed a clear stream. Beside the brook the grass was all red with the blood-dipped leaves of the painted-cup and purple-and-gold with iris and blue with gentian. Before Joe could stop him, Fred lay down to drink of the clear



water from the flowing spring and sprang up with a shout of pain, puffing and blowing like a porpoise.

"It's boiling hot," he gasped.

"Sure it is, greedy pig!" reproved the Indian. "You come with me to next spring and I get you nice cup of hot chicken soup."

"Say, I'm in on this!" called Jud, hurrying up.

"Me too!" chimed in Will. "I suppose you've got a cafeteria hidden somewhere in the rocks. After the soup, I'd like a little vanilla and strawberry ice-cream mixed."

Joe made no reply, but handed each one a tin cup and then commandeering salt and pepper shakers led the way toward the cliff. Some distance from the main stream a smoking spring bubbled out from under a boulder. Its steaming water showed a clear gold. Joe dipped up a cupful, shook in a liberal supply of pepper and salt, stirred it with a stick until it was cool enough to drink, and handed it to Jud, who tasted it warily. An expression of pleased surprise stole over his face, and he sipped more and more of the steaming con-



tents, then tipped his head back and drank and drank until every drop was gone.

"Chicken soup it is!" he said.

In a minute the other two had filled their mugs, and were not satisfied until they had swallowed two or three cups of the clear liquid which, with the addition of seasoning, was hardly to be distinguished from the soup which Joe had named. He could give no explanation of the spring nor from what compound of minerals it had its flavor.

"It always been here," he said. "We used to stop and drink here when crossing over. Winter-time, when cold from long paddle, it taste mighty good."

The boys threw themselves down on the soft grass and attacked the defenceless hamper.

Over their heads and around the edges of the cliff whirled and wheeled birds whose variety and rarity delighted the heart of Will, who was the bird expert of his troop. There were skuas, those beautiful pirates of the air, and, up on the rock, nesting murrelets with black heads and white bodies, looking like rows of champagne bottles as they sat, each one brood-



ing its single egg. Joe told them that the big green eggs of this bird are so tough that the Indians, when they gathered them, threw them into baskets like potatoes, and that the smaller end is long and sharp-pointed, so that, when the wind blows against the cliffs, the eggs move in a circle with the little ends always pointing toward the center instead of rolling off the ledges. Then there were puffins, or sea-parrots, strange birds with triangular bills and the sides of their heads ashy white and which dig burrows and nest underground. The Leach's petrel, a sooty-brown bird with forked tail having a white patch at its base, was also there—nesting, too, in burrows which ran in under the turf just below the grass-roots and ended in a sort of pocket where its single egg was laid. Will had seen these birds far out at sea on the voyage thither, but had never expected to find them nesting. As they lay watching the swirling clouds of birds screaming above them on the cliff-sides, Will pointed out to them a kittiwake gull, with gleaming white head and tail and pearl-gray wings and back, which was coming in from



the sea with a small fish in its beak. Suddenly a dark bird, which had been soaring high in the sky, shot down through the air like a flash straight toward the kittiwake as it flapped leisurely along toward the cliff. Although the stranger flew like a hawk as it neared the water, the boys could plainly see that it was also a dark, blackish-brown gull, with a white band across the under sides of the wings near the tip.

"It's the jiddy hawk, one of the jaeger gulls," explained Will. "It lives on the fish that other birds catch."

Even as he spoke, the kittiwake gave a startled cry and flew for its life. In and out among the cliffs, twisting and turning, it screamed and flapped and dodged, but always just over it like a black shadow hung its pursuer with long claws stretched out, always threatening, but never striking. Back and forth they went, and still the kittiwake clung to its fish and still the larger gull menaced it from above. At last the jaeger's patience was exhausted, and with a swift flirt of its wings, it made a jab for the kittiwake's head with its



sharp, hooked beak. The smaller gull managed to dodge the thrust, and then, feeling that there was no use in fighting further against fate, opened its beak and allowed the silvery fish to drop toward the water. There was a flash of brown wings above it, and down through the air whirled the robber-bird and seized the fish in mid-air as neatly as a good fielder scoops in a high fly. The kittiwake, with a mournful squeal, started back to the sea for a fresh supply.

"Some system that," remarked Jud, admiringly. "Old Mr. Jiddy's fishin' fleet does the workin' an' he does the eatin'."

Just then Will caught sight of a flock of great snowy birds larger than geese, with black wing-tips, which came circling over the cliff a hundred feet above the water.

"Here come the real fishing fleet!" he exclaimed. "These gulls are dubs compared with them. Just watch that flock of gannets a minute, and you 'll see something pretty."

He had hardly spoken when two of the snowy birds, all luminous in the bright sunlight, suddenly dived from the flock straight



down through a hundred feet of space. Their telescopic eyes had seen fish within striking distance in the water below. With long head and neck stretched straight out in front, they balanced themselves with their tails as they went down, whizzing through the air exactly as a human diver would do, and together struck the water with a tremendous splash. Far below the surface they sank, only to come up again, each with a large fish in its sharp beak.

It was Joe, however, who made the most practical addition to the ornithological discoveries of the day. A flock of small, plump, chubby birds suddenly appeared from nowhere and drifted around the Argonauts like a cloud of whirling leaves. Springing to his feet, Joe seized a long stick in one hand and began to wave with the other, a long bandana, which, with a quick motion, he unwrapped from his neck. As the gay-colored bit of cloth fluttered in the air, the silly, slow-flying birds came close and closer until they were whirling around Joe's head like a swarm of bees. Suddenly dropping the handkerchief, the In-



dian grasped the stick with both hands and swung it back and forth through the flock with all his might. Before the swarm had time to untangle and fly away, he had laid out flopping on the beach an even dozen of the plump-est, fattest, roundest birds the boys had ever seen. "Cheekies" Joe called them, but Will recognized them as little auks.

"They best bird to eat in this country," explained Joe, as he hurried over to help the boys secure them. "Indian boys catch them in spring out of air with big nets."

A few moments later, as each of the party wolfed down a fresh-broiled auk, they fully agreed with Joe. Not even the flesh of the ruffed grouse or the breast of a wild-celery-fed canvasback duck can compare with the plump, succulent, dark meat of that little auk which so few white men have ever tasted.

Will and Fred would have liked to stay and explore every nook and cranny of Half-Way Island, but dinner was hardly over before Joe was urging them on.

"Long way to go yet," he said. "Wind may come up. Let's go while goin' 's good."





"Quite right, quite right!" agreed old Jud. "The trouble with you kids is that you always want to be eatin' or loafin'. It's mighty lucky that you got a hustler along like me," and the old man lay back and smoked his pipe until the canoes were packed and launched.

All that afternoon they paddled on through a tangle of islands until at last they came to a long stretch of open sea, beyond which loomed the black bulk of snow-shrouded Akotan, the Island of the Free People. Straight ahead of them the sinking sun made a long golden pathway, and they followed its gleam with hearts as high as those heroes of old, who, with Jason at the helm and Orpheus at the bow, harping them on, smote the wine-colored sea with their oars and drove straight toward the glitter of the Golden Fleece and the beauties and the enchantments and the dangers of that ancient island. In the dimming light, the black outlines of Akotan seemed to show grim and sinister, and a silence fell upon the little party as they neared the end of their long journey. Had Joe's uncle the Shuman come back into power, and, if not, would white men be per-





mitted to land, or, if once ashore, ever to leave the island? Thoughts like these must have been passing through Joe's mind, but nothing of doubt or of anxiety showed in his calm face. As Will watched him, he admired, as he had so often done before, his composure and control. He had the power, which so many white men lack, of slipping on indifference like a mask when vital things were at stake.

As the coast of the island opened up, the boys could see that the foreshore stretched out toward them in a long promontory. On one side of this appeared a narrow opening between towering cliffs, leading into a vast landlocked bay which stretched far into the interior. Lofty peaks, some snow-crowned and calm, others shrouded in smoke and blackened and barren from hidden fires, guarded the shores of this bay. On the other side of the promontory stretched a belt of small, rocky islands, among which, even on this calm day, the rising tide swelled and roared like a mill-race.

As they neared the shore, Fred had the shock of his life. The silence and the uncer-



tainty and the waiting had been a strain on his nerves, which were not as well attuned to danger as were those of the other three. As he looked anxiously toward the forbidding shores, there sounded a little splash in the water close to the side of the canoe where he was paddling bow. As he turned to look, a round, sleek, dark-brown head shot out of the water not three feet from him and a pair of lustrous brown eyes looked directly into his. To his horrified gaze, it was the head of a man. The hair was sleek and parted by the water, a long moustache drooped over white teeth, and below the brilliant human eyes showed a short, snub nose. In spite of himself, Fred gave a yell and nearly went over into the water.

"Hey! What's the matter with you?" squawked Jud, from the stern, righting the canoe with difficulty.

"A merman!" gasped Fred, pointing with his paddle at the bobbing head. Even as he moved, it sank out of sight with a plop and there was nothing to be seen but the still green water.

"Merman nothin'!" shouted Jud, who had



caught a glimpse of the apparition. "It's only an old hair-seal. They'll often come up around a boat near shore in this latitude. Say, son," he went on, looking critically at Fred who was shaking all over, "you want to buck up and not have these nervous spells. A hair-seal is about as dangerous as a hair-sofa. If that scares you, what'll you do on shore among all the ragin', howlin', slaughterin' Indians that we're goin' to meet?"

"Well, if it was only a seal, why did it wink at me as it went down?" gasped poor Fred.

Before Jud could answer, Joe from the leading canoe held up his hand for silence. They were nearing a cleft in the rock which led to the inner bay and which was the only entrance to the island. Beyond the point where the tide-rips lashed the rocky islets, the shores of the island came down in lofty cliffs of dark granite, against which the surf boomed and dashed, leaving no landing even for a small boat. These sentinel cliffs, with the raging packs of breakers at their feet, extended all the way around Akotan. The only entrance to the island by winter or summer was through



the narrow crooked pass into the landlocked bay.

As they approached nearer and nearer to this gateway, Joe, who was leading, paddled slower and slower, and at last, when they were close to the rift in the rocks, stopped altogether. As the canoes drifted on the water, he raised his paddle high in the air and gave a strange, wailing call which echoed back and forth among the rocks. Hardly had the sound died away, when a group of men on either side of the little strait stepped out into sight. Some were armed with rifles of the most modern make, others carried short, heavy bows made of whale-bone and wrapped with sinew. As the boys were to learn afterward, this gate was guarded by day and night, nor could any one safely enter without signaling their approach.

For long Joe talked with the leader of the nearest group, a spare, dark, wiry man, with Japanese features, who finally dismissed his attendants and beckoned the canoes to follow him as he walked along the ledges that overhung the narrow channel.



"It all right," said Joe, as the canoes came abreast. "That Haidahn. He old friend of my father and now one of chiefs. He say that Great Chief has come back. He send him word, and we stay in guest-lodge until he see us."

In through the narrow, crooked pass, which one man could hold unseen against a regiment, they went. Finally, both canoes grounded on a little beach where Haidahn was waiting for them with several attendants. As Joe presented the whole party, the chief received them with the dignity and reserve of a prince. To their surprise, Haidahn spoke excellent, although rather old-fashioned, English, which Joe told them he had learned when traveling with some of the arctic explorers in his youth.

The canoes and outfit were left to the attendants, and Haidahn led the way through a little Indian village to the guest-lodge, a large tepee with a totem-pole in front of it. Inside blazed a fire whose smoke escaped through a hole in the roof, while all around were clean, comfortable couches of various furs and skins. There the party rested while Joe explained



to them that they would not have the freedom of the village until they had seen the Great Chief and received permission from his own lips to remain.

"When will that be?" inquired Will.

"Probably right away," said Joe.

Sure enough, after a substantial meal which the chief's attendants brought them, Haidahn himself came to them in the long twilight which faded and dimmed, but never seemed to deepen entirely into dark. A half-moon showed pale against the deep, pulsing, black-violet of the sky as they followed a little winding path which twisted like a snake in and out among knolls and sand-dunes, but always led away from the village, until the barking of the dogs and the shrill tones of the tribe had died away into silence. Suddenly, around a bend, the whole party stood facing the land-locked bay into which they had come a few hours before. In front of them towered a vast peak. Its flanks were black with the iron blackness of naked rock, and its sudden stern girth seemed grim and menacing. Its head was hidden in a cloud of black smoke, shot now and then



with the lurid gleam of hidden fires. Even as they looked, the mountain muttered with a deep, harsh, bellowing note that echoed terribly across the deserted bay. At the sound, Will thought of that other mountain which could not be touched, of the Pillar of Cloud and of Fire and of that Voice so dreadful that those who heard it fell upon their faces and besought that it should speak no more. To-night there came to all of them the thrill of an unearthly horror, as the deep mutter of the sleeping volcano sounded down from the lowering sky. In silence they stole along the edge of the bay, and once again that fearful voice spoke from the clouds and the vast peak seemed to shake and tremble.

"Shishaldin speaks to-night," whispered the chief, stretching a trembling hand toward the mountain. "This has not happened in my time. It means there be great things afoot."

In the half-light they could see ahead of them a low building set against the side of a sand-dune and facing the bay and the dreadful head of Shishaldin. A thin column of smoke trickled out of the hollow mountain.



"The lodge of the Great Chief," whispered Joe.

It was built of flat slabs of cedar, with a ridge-pole and two slanting cross-beams at either end and without nail or peg, all the beams being cunningly spliced together with strips of hide and roping of cedar-bark. In front of the peak of the roof towered a mighty totem-pole fifty feet high. Its back fitted into the front of the lodge, and it was formed of two enormous serpents, facing in opposite directions and carved out of the solid wood. The open jaws of the lower one, some six feet from the ground, gaped horribly, with blood-red fangs, and was the only entrance to the lodge. Haidahn led the way to where a notched log led up to the ghastly opening. At the foot of this rude ladder old Jud paused.

"I ain't so fond of snakes," he remonstrated, "that I want to crawl into one's mouth."

The chief was much incensed.

"Come or go!" he hissed from the top of the ladder, motioning to the open jaws and then pointing to the back track. Jud was no quitter.



"I 'll come all right," he returned, picking his way carefully up the notched log, "but I want to say, Mr. High Darn, that I don't think much of your taste in doorways."

Inside was a long room floored with flat cedar slabs and covered with skins. In front of a smouldering fire, on a raised couch covered with heavy furs, sat cross-legged and motionless as a carven image the imposing figure of an old man. He had a huge, massive head, while his face made the boys think of the pictures of Julius Caesar in their histories. There was the same aquiline nose, tight, thin lips, and air of haughty calm which showed in the face of that other great chief. For some time the little party stood in front of the old man in silence. His hair was white as snow and he sat with shut eyes, so that the boys thought him either blind or asleep. At last, in a voice of amazing depth and resonance, he spoke in English.

"Whence come you and why?" he questioned.

There was a pause. Then Joe stepped forward.



"I brought them, O Great Chief," he said. At the first sound of his voice the old man stirred slightly and his eyes flashed open, bright and of a lustrous black which contrasted vividly with the whiteness of his hair.

"By what right?" boomed the voice again, while outside the muttering note of dread Shishaldin sounded once more.

"By the right of my blood," returned Joe, proudly.

"Show me the sign," commanded the old chief.



## CHAPTER V

### THE LIFE ADVENTUROUS

**I**N the half-light, with a quick motion the Indian boy pulled open his flannel shirt, exposing his bare breast. Just over the heart a curling, twisted, red mark showed. Will remembered that he had seen it often while scouting with Joe in the days when, stripped to the skin, they had started out to win the cabin for the Troop. He had always supposed it to be some kind of a birth-mark, and, knowing an Indian's sensitiveness in regard to such matters, had never even spoken of it to his companion. To-night, as Joe leaned forward so that the flickering firelight shone full upon him, the tattooed totem of the intertwined serpents stood out in bold relief against his brown skin. The Great Chief looked at it with eyes that seemed to gleam and glow like the flames that leaped up in the dark. Suddenly rising to his feet with a



quick, lithe motion, he towered over the boy for a moment and, resting his hands on both of the lad's shoulders, looked long and deep into his eyes and spoke to him in the sonorous Chippewa tongue, which only Jud and Joe understood.

"Ilyamna!" he said at last, while a note of tenderness trembled through his deep voice. "They told me that thou hadst come back, but I would not believe it until I had seen thee and the sign with my own eyes. Be thou welcome, and thy friends, to thy home and thy tribe."

"It is indeed my tribe, O my father," returned the boy, in the same language; "but my home is now near the rising sun. I have journeyed from there with these my friends to be glad that thou art still living and to ask thy help to find what thou and I once did seek." And the boy's voice lowered until the last words were almost in a whisper.

There was a long silence.

"What thou askest is now not mine to give," finally returned the chief. "To-day only those may go to Goreloi, the Island of the



Bear, who prove themselves worthy. Once there, he who will may seek. Whether he find or not is for the gods to say. I know," he went on, laying a great arm, knotted and gnarled like the trunk of some old tree, caressingly across the boy's shoulders, "that thou wilt prove thyself worthy, and I hope that thy friends journey with thee. One moon from now, those who be chosen will go. Until then, thou and thine shall dwell in the guest-lodge and Haidahn and Negouac shall teach and test thee and them." Sinking down on his couch again in front of the fire, the old chief closed his eyes wearily in token that the audience was over.

The five walked in silence for some time after they had left the lodge of the Shuman. Something of the mystery and the gloom and the power of the Great Chief still remained with them. Furthermore the rest of the Argonauts found themselves regarding Joe with an entirely different feeling from what they had ever had before. It was disconcerting to find suddenly that the boy with whom they had played and joked at home was there a



prince of the blood royal. Even Will, who knew Joe better than any of the others, and Jud, who had the profoundest disrespect for any and all Indians, found themselves unconsciously treating him with a certain amount of deference, while Haidahn, proud chief as he was, ever since the Shuman had publicly recognized the boy Ilyamna as of his blood, was almost humble when he spoke to him.

Although it was only an hour or so after midnight, yet in those high latitudes the sky was already light. Far away, near the entrance to Oonimak Pass, through which they had come, they could see the snow-covered head of Mount Lituya towering dead and dumb, while just across the bay, all black and blood, the vast volcano of Shishaldin muttered to itself. At the great flat rock, which faced the bay at a long distance from the Great Chief's dwelling, they stopped and sat down, while Joe told them what he had said.

"It means," said Will, at last, in a low voice, "that no one goes to the island who has n't proved his courage."

Joe nodded silently.



It was Fred who relieved the situation.

"That let's me out," he said disconsolately. "I'm one of the best cowards in the world. Anyway, you took me along on account of my running."

From that night they lived in the guest-lodge. Every day Haidahn called soon after the morning meal and guided them on hunting trips farther and farther into the wild interior of the island or on fishing voyages through the troubled seas that beat against the rocky shores of Akotan. At first they would come back every night and have supper in the lodge and spend long happy evenings together talking and telling stories around the fire. Haidahn was friendly, but, except with Joe, there was always about him an air of reserve and dignity. By degrees, Jud and the boys became acquainted with many of the more prominent warriors and chiefs of the tribe. They all differed from each other, not only in appearance and disposition, but in some cases even in race. A century before, this Athabascan tribe had taken refuge on the island from the Russian freebooters and fur-collectors who



had oppressed them. After they had won for themselves the title of the Free People, many adventurous spirits flocked to them from different tribes. Those who showed themselves worthy were taken into the tribe, and many of them became chiefs and rose to high rank in the council of the Free People. Among them was Negouac, with whom the boys became much more intimate than they ever did with Haidahn. He was short and swarthy, with a wide, smiling face, and was nearly as broad as he was high. He called himself an Innuït, which Jud explained was the same as an Eskimo. In spite of his short, round appearance, the boys found Negouac to be a man of enormous strength and of a wandering, adventurous disposition. As Haidahn's time was more taken up with the affairs of the tribe, it was Negouac who at last accompanied them on all of their trips. Unknown to themselves, the Argonauts were being tried and trained for the tests which later would decide whether any or all of them would go to Goreloi.


The first of the every-day adventures of the Argonauts came one stormy morning. All



night long a gale had howled in from the southeast and the surf boomed and bellowed against the cliffs. As the boys sat down to breakfast, a new sound came from the sea, which drowned even the boom of the surf. It was a deep bass roar, with that curious subterranean quality which can be heard in the roar of a full-grown lion. First one, and then another, and then a whole chorus of these roars would sound from the sea. Each one started as a muttering note, lower and deeper than was ever sounded on any organ made by man. Gradually it seemed to come up to the surface and swell in volume until it ended in a full-throated roar like the blast of some great bass steam-whistle. When the full chorus was in cry the air fairly vibrated with the tremendous notes. Just then Negouac came panting and running up to the lodge.

"Hurry," he said, "eat up breakfast. Sea-lions have come."

Ten minutes later the Argonauts had joined the hunters of the tribe. To the Free People, the arrival of the sea-lion was an important event. Largest of all the seals except the sea-





elephant, which is found only in antarctic waters, the sea-lion furnished the tribe with material for their boats, their tents, and their clothes, as well as large stores of meat and oil. As the party reached the shores of one of the numerous interior bays, they saw a great sight. Beyond the rocks, such a surf boomed and dashed against a long sloping beach as the boys had never seen before. Tremendous breakers ten feet high would come roaring up, to break on the rocks and sand with a crash. It would seem as if nothing living would dare to venture among their mighty, tossing heads. Yet there, swimming, playing, bobbing, enjoying the danger, and roaring down even the crash of the falling waters, was a great herd of sea-lion. The enormous males, ten and eleven feet long, would thrust their tawny chests and short, grizzled manes far out of the water and roar, while around them sported the females, about half their size. As the hunters watched them, concealed behind the rocks, the herd came closer and closer to shore. Suddenly the whole herd seemed to come dashing toward them through mid-air as they rode



the crests of the mighty breakers. At times they would disappear like ghosts, only to reappear again on the tiptop of the surging billows. Riding the surf with marvelous balance and speed, just as it seemed to the watchers on the shore as if every one of them must be crushed on the rocks and ground to pieces under the weight and smash of the falling waters, each lion shot out of the smother of foam and landed far up the beach, as lightly and buoyantly as if they had been made of cork. Hauling themselves up beyond the reach of the waters, one by one the herd took their places, until half a hundred or so were scattered here and there far along the beach. The old males, especially, were most imposing animals. As they reared up their heads, necks, and mighty chests, they towered fully six feet in height. From in front each sea-lion seemed a beast of tremendous size, strength, and girth, measuring perhaps nine feet around the chest. The hind quarter was a small, narrow trunk, tapering off into puny, feeble, hind flippers. As they first came out of the surf the sea-lions were of a dark chocolate-brown and



black color and their skins, covered with short hair, glistened as if they had been oiled. After the herd had found their places, the younger ones frolicked and played in and out of the water and through the surf like puppies. Their supple spines, with ball-and-socket joint attachments, allowed them to bend and curve as if they had been made of India rubber. Well beyond the wash of the waves, the battered, scarred old males lay by themselves. With their long heavy necks, their sinister muzzles, their lips snarling back over fierce, glittering teeth and red-and-white bull-dog eyes, they looked like sullen, savage, dangerous beasts.

Yet old Negouac told the boys that the creatures were dangerous only to each other and would always flee from man. When at last the herd was fairly set, the hunters stole down from behind the rocks and, crouching in the dim light, crept on all fours across the surf-beaten sand, taking advantage of the shelter of every boulder, until they had formed a line between the surf and the greater part of the herd. Then, springing to their



feet, the whole band, waving their arms over their heads, shouted and yelled like demons, rushing toward the unsuspecting herd. In a second, in spite of their fierce aspect, every sea-lion there, old and young, started off with a mad rush. Now a sea-lion, when startled, can sprint for a few yards at quite remarkable speed, considering that it has to depend upon flippers instead of paws. Moreover, it always moves in the direction in which it is faced. Those that are faced toward the surf dash toward the surf and nothing can stop them. Old Jud had no knowledge of this peculiarity, and as he was prancing around, shouting and waving his arms with the rest of the band and watching the herd scatter, he suddenly saw bearing down upon him like a battle-ship a huge male. Its tremendous chest and head towered fully six feet high, as it rushed down upon him, gnashing with its glittering teeth in a most terrifying way. In spite of its appearance, the animal was only intent on escaping; and if Jud had stepped two feet to one side, he would have been perfectly safe. He did step the necessary two



feet, and kept on stepping at an extraordinary rate of speed for one of his age. Without even glancing back, he sprinted down the beach like a race-horse, convinced that the towering beast was close upon his heels. Even the stolid hunters grinned as they watched him skim along the sand long after the escaping sea-lion had been lost to view in the surf, while the Argonauts doubled themselves up with laughter.

"Keep it up, old man!" shouted Fred; "you 've broken the fifty-yard record and I 'll bet you break the hundred."

At the shout, Jud glanced over his shoulder, and, seeing that he was no longer pursued, slowed down and came back slowly to the grinning group.

"I just stepped out of the way of that roaring, ramping old lion," he explained. "Then I felt sort of cold so I thought I 'd jog up and down the beach to get warmed up."

"Some jog!" remarked Fred.

His turn, however, came next. After the hunters had rounded up those of the herd which had not escaped into the surf, they



started to drive them over to the killing-grounds just outside of the village, where they were slaughtered like cattle and skinned and dressed for the tribe's yearly supply of leather and oil. In spite of their menacing appearance, the whole herd was easily driven. If they stopped to rest too long, they were prodded into motion again from behind. If they attempted to straggle off to one side, they were frightened back by hand-clapping. One of the hunters carried a blue-gingham umbrella, which must have come to the tribe from the trading-station on the mainland. In any case, where some determined animal insisted upon breaking out of the line, this umbrella was at once brought up. Suddenly opened, it was sufficient to frighten back even the fiercest of the herd. Fred, unfortunately for himself, made the mistake of believing that, because a sea-lion will not attack a man, it is incapable of defending itself. Accordingly, when one big male balked and refused to go on, Fred walked up close to its menacing front and prodded it with a stick. Just as he did so, his foot slipped and he fell flat on the slippery



stones right in front of the vast brute. Like lightning, the great head shot down and the fierce jaws gripped Fred's back. He struggled to release himself in vain. A sea-lion has been known to crush quartz pebbles in its teeth as if they were brittle lumps of sugar. Fortunately for Fred, the grip of the teeth was in his clothes and not in his flesh. With a flint of its mighty neck, the great lion whirled the boy up six feet from the ground and flipped him off into the air without an effort, ripping his coat, sweater, and shirt completely off his back. As he fell sprawling and kicking, Negouac, Joe, and Will, who were nearest, leaped forward and caught him in their arms before he struck the hard rocks.

"Striker's out!" bellowed Jud, like an umpire. "Batter up!"

When Fred was once more on his feet and looking around in a dazed way, the old man pulled off his coat and put it on him.

"The next time, son," he remarked, "instead of makin' funny cracks at older an' better men than yourself, you keep out of lions' mouths."



After the sea-lion round-up was over, Negouac took them fishing. For the first time, Will and Fred were initiated into the use of bidarkas, as the natives named the little craft in which they were accustomed to fish and voyage far and fast. These arctic canoes were made of a light framework of cedar and willow withes lashed together with sinews, and were covered with untanned sea-lion's skins, which were sewed on while they were wet and soft. When these skins dried out, they contracted and bound the whole frame as taut as the parchment of a drum. Each bidarka was smeared over with thick seal-oil, and was always hauled out and dried carefully in the wind after being used. One of the bidarkas had two man-holes, while the other had three. Joe, who was accustomed to the balance of a bidarka, took charge of the smaller one with Will, while Negouac, Jud, and Fred were the crew in the three-holed vessel. Will took one look at the skin-covered boats and then timidly suggested to Negouac that they go out in their own canoes. The suggestion was repelled with scorn by the chief.



"White man's boat only good for children," he remarked. "Bidarka the boat for men."

"Drowned men, I should say," remarked Fred, as he also looked doubtfully at the double-prowed, square-sterned, narrow craft in which they were to venture out on the icy, treacherous waters. Negouac only grunted. Each one of the crew was fitted out with a waterproof garment known as the *kamlayka*, a kind of sweater made of the skin of the hair-seal, waterproofed with sea-oil, and smelling, as Fred said, like a fish-market on a hot day. For boots, each Argonaut was furnished with *tarbosars*, long, comfortable boots made of sealion skin with the thick leather of the flippers for the feet. Besides all these, old Negouac wore a kind of outer vest made of membrane, lined with feathers, and ornamented with tufts of dyed hair and lines of goose-quill work. Moreover, in order to show that he was quite accustomed to the ways of white men, Negouac sported a high silk hat, which some joker at the trading-station on the mainland had once sold to him. Joe warned them that a chief must never be laughed at, but it was all



that the boys could do to keep their faces straight every time they looked at his head-piece. Once, indeed, he caught Fred doubled up behind him in noiseless convulsions.

"What the matter with you?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Something hit me on the funny-bone," gasped the boy.

"Never mind him, Chief," broke in Jud; "he has these fits at times."

It took Will and Fred some time to learn to balance these curious little boats and to use the narrow-bladed paddles which went with them. Far out among the rocky islands they anchored with a long line made of kelp with a round stone for an anchor, and fished for cod with lines made of braided sinews fastened to clumsy wooden hooks. In spite of this tackle, they were soon hauling in great silvery cod and haddock and pollock. The fish bit well, but, like all cod, were not gamy.

"It's like catching an iron safe," objected Will, as he hauled up a ten-pound, unresisting cod. Then for a change he pulled up a sea-spider, a hairy, horrible crab a foot in di-



ameter, and nearly upset the bidarka in trying to keep out of its way as it came into the boat sprawling and biting and clawing. A moment later an exquisite jelly-fish drifted past, a mass of translucent, opalescent pink and blue and gold, with streaming tendrils ten feet long. In spite of a warning shout from Joe, Fred tried to pick it up; but as he thrust his bare arm among the many-colored streamers, they stung him like a hundred nettles, until his flesh was covered with rows of white welts like enormous mosquito-bites. Jud was greatly amused.

"Pickin' jelly-fish is a good deal like pickin' bumble-bees," he observed from his boat. "It can be done, but it's apt to be a little wearin'."

Just then Jud had a bite, and pulled out of the water a curious-looking green fish, with protruding front teeth, green eyes, and sharp spines. As it came out of the water, it grunted violently and commenced to fill itself with air and swell and puff until it was as large as a foot-ball, and bounced on the water like one as Jud indignantly threw it back.

After they got back to shore, the Argonauts



took a little walk in the afternoon sunlight, while Negouac superintended the preparation of a wonderful fish-chowder.

Some distance up the slope on which the guest-lodge stood, Fred came across a flat stone of such a size that only a strong man could lift it. Under one end, partially concealed in the grass, he noticed a cloud of able-bodied yellow-jackets flying in and out of a round hole. It did not take much knowledge of natural history for him to decide that their nest was concealed under that stone, and he made up his mind to get back at Jud, if possible, for his jeers about the jellyfish. Poking a long stick in the hole, he quickly aroused the whole stinging, fighting swarm. Then, retiring to a safe distance, he waited until the furious little fighters had gone back into their nest. From experience he knew that now the merest touch would send them out ready to sting their worst. Then, the stage all set, he prepared to have Jud play the principal part.

"There is n't a man here can do it," he declaimed loudly, winking at Will and Joe as they came toward him.



"I 'll bet I can," played up Will, not knowing at all what he was talking about.

"I do anything you do," was Joe's contribution.

It was enough.

"What's all this talk about, anyway?" demanded Jud, hurrying up. "Whatever it is, you can bet the old man can do it better."

"No, Jud," said Fred, kindly, "this is n't for you. That stone is too big for anybody here to lift. I'm going down to get Negouac, and perhaps he and I together can turn it over."

"You fellows make me tired," said Jud. "Any grown man can twitch that stone up in a minute."

"No, no, Jud," broke in Will, who still had no idea what the joke was about, but saw what Fred wanted Jud to do. "You might have been able to do it once, but you'd probably break a tendon now. You want to remember, Jud, you're not so young as you used to be."

That was the last straw.

"I 'll show you!" hissed Jud, and springing ahead of the boys, he wound his wiry, knotted



hands in under the beveled edge of the rock, and, with a tremendous tug, pulled it up and tipped it over so rapidly that he fell over backward with it. As the stone turned over, there came into view a round gray globe about the size of a muskmelon built against the stone and fitted into a little hollow in the ground under it. Out from the hole at the end of this nest poured a perfect cloud of striped, stinging, buzzing, swarming yellow-jackets. In a second they swarmed over Jud, stinging early and often, while the rest of the Argonauts basely fled. Jud squealed and rolled and ran and rolled again, stung until even his tanned and toughened skin showed great welts and wales.

As they sat down to the chowder that evening, Jud observed an icy silence and a dignity so profound that no one even dared refer to the incident of the afternoon.

"Try a little more of the chowder, Jud," finally ventured Fred. "They say it's very soothing."

"Yes," chimed in Joe. "Give Chief Jud some more fish. Fish don't sting."



"Some do," murmured Fred, looking at his puffed-up hand; "and if I remembered right, one of my friends nearly killed himself laughing. They do say, though," he went on, "that he laughs last, who laughs best."

Over Jud's swollen and weather-beaten face a slow grin spread painfully.

"I 'm stung all right," he said, "an' you 've got the last laugh—so far."

That night Death, the great adventurer, visited the Argonauts in disguise. It had been a long and eventful day, and the tired boys slept deep in the starless twilight which in those high latitudes takes the place of night in summer. The skin flap which served as a door to the guest-lodge had been left open for air, and the Argonauts slept in a half-circle wrapped up in soft furs. Only old Jud, although he slept, still kept the alertness which a long life of danger and adventure had taught him. It was the hour after midnight, when men sleep soundest, that there filtered through Jud's consciousness a strange sound of crying. At the same instant some saving instinct aroused the wilderness-trained Indian, and Joe



and Jud raised their heads almost together. Through the opening the pale light of the half-hidden sun shone dimly. At first they could see nothing, but around and about the lodge something was hurrying, making a fretting little wailing noise, like the cry of a feeble sick child. It was enough for both of them. With one movement Jud sat up in bed and drew from out a cunningly hidden holster, which night and day went under his left armpit, an automatic. Not so prepared as the old man, Joe fumbled vainly in the blankets for his own revolver, which he had left under his pillow and which during the night had worked down among the bedding.

"Don't move," hissed Jud, as the Indian boy scrabbled among the bed-clothes, trying in vain to get his hand upon the missing weapon. "Quiet! Quiet!" he whispered; "it's close to Will."

As he spoke, a black-and-white animal trotted with short stiff steps right along Will's sleeping body. Its ground-color was black, and there were three long white stripes running longitudinally from the back of his head,



with the white stripe on the pointed muzzle, which is the hall-mark of the skunk.

Joe had stopped moving as the old man spoke, but his face was wrinkled with agonized lines as the little animal burrowed and sniffed its way along the sleeping body, seemingly trying to find some exposed place. As Will lay, it was impossible for Jud to shoot without certainly piercing his prone body. Only when the beast reached his shoulder would he be able to have a clear shot against the light of the opening. Even then, only an expert with a revolver would dare try it. The least deflection would strike the sleeping boy in the face or cut through his shoulder. The old man never moved, and only with his eyes did he warn Joe from stirring. As the crying, nuzzling animal came nearer and nearer to the boy's exposed face, the muscles in Joe's right hand became tenser. Finally it stood on the boy's shoulder and wailed fretfully almost in his ear as it stretched forth like a flash its long pointed muzzle, whose tiny, gleaming teeth were covered with a white froth. Quick as the thrust of the animal was, the shot from



Jud's automatic was quicker. Shooting from his hip he sent a soft-nosed bullet directly back of the fore shoulder of the little beast, and the impact whirled it through the air and dashed it to the ground, mangled and lifeless. Will had already been awakened by the sound of its crying, and, at the crack of the revolver, started up along with Fred. They saw Jud sitting there tense and motionless, while Joe, with a face of horror, was struggling out of his tangled bed-clothes. In the light of the doorway they caught a glimpse of the mangled black-and-white body. Joe threw himself upon Will with more emotion than his chum had ever seen him display.

"He not bite you? No scratch, no mark?" he demanded, turning Will's face toward the light.

"No, why should he?" said Will.

"Thank God for that," spoke up Jud, for the first time. "I could n't shoot before, an' I was afraid that I might have been too late."

"What's all this fuss about a dead skunk?" broke in Fred. "Are they so dangerous?"

"Son," said Jud, solemnly, "if you had ever



seen a man die from hydrophobia, as I have, you 'd say that this skunk was dangerous. Every once in awhile, in the Northwest, these skunks go mad. When they do, they 'll bite a sleeping man in the face if they can. When that happens, the man dies. It may be in two weeks, or it may not be for a year, but he always dies—horribly.”

“How do you tell when one is mad?” broke in Will, beginning to realize what he had escaped.

“Mad skunk,” explained Joe, “always cry and cry until he kill some one.”

At this moment old Negouac, who had been spending the night in a neighboring lodge, came in, aroused by the sound of the shot. As he saw the mangled skunk and noticed that the white froth showed all around his pointed muzzle, his round face set in stern lines.

“Who kill that?” he asked.

Joe pointed to Jud. The old Indian stepped up to the trapper and made the same sweeping gesture with his arms spread out in front of him that Haidahn had made when he approached the Shuman.



"You kill devil who come back to earth and take many of our tribe," he said. "You go to Goreloi for that."

Jud laughed a little sheepishly.

"That 's nothin'," he said. "I 'm glad I did it an' I want to go to Goreloi, but I 'm not goin' because I killed a skunk. You 'll have to let me pass some better test than that."



## CHAPTER VI

### THE QUEST OF THE OTTER

THE Argonauts were gathered together with Negouac in the guest-lodge a few nights after Will's narrow escape from the mad skunk. After a long day of hunting there had been a wonderful dinner of broiled salmon and elk steaks, and now in front of the fire the talk had turned to the tests which loomed up before them all before they could hope to see Goreloi. Negouac had been telling them something of the delights of that enchanted island.

"Goreloi all green, air smell sweet and there be flowers, big red fruit, painted birds, warm baths and good hunting," he assured them. But when they tried to find out where it was and how to get there the Eskimo shut up like a clam.

"Sounds like a fairy story to me," murmured



old Jud to Will. "Painted birds and red apples don't grow in this latitude."

"After seeing Half-Way Island and the chicken-soup spring," returned Will, "I'll believe anything. What about the tests, Negouac," he went on. "What does a fellow have to do to get there?"

"He must be brave," was all the chief would say at first.

"That lets old man Jud out," suggested Joe, who loved to tease the old trapper. "He run from little striped hornet and squeal like a girl."

"How do you get that way?" howled Jud, much incensed. "I never squealed a squeal. Nobody but a bonehead would stand still and let a lot of pison hornets sting him to death. Moreover who you callin' 'old'? You'll stub your toe one of these day if you don't watch out."

"What do you call being brave?" persisted Will, turning again to Negouac.

"Kill gray wolf with knife or white bear with spear," responded the latter after a moment's thought, "or catch kahlan or sea-wolf."



Will turned inquiringly to Jud.

"Kahlan's sea-otter like I told you already," explained the trapper, "an' sea-wolf's the same as killer-whale."

"Well," said Will, "me for the sea-otter. I'll leave the bears and wolves and whales to you fellows. I guess a sea-otter is about all I can get away with."

Negouac said something to Joe in his own language.

"He say," translated Joe, "that take braver man to get sea-otter than bear, wolf or whale. Only two hunters in whole tribe dare go after them."

"Well," said Will, "I'll be the third."

"All right," said Negouac, who had been listening, "you shall have chance."

This chance came sooner than he expected. The very next day one of the great storms which make that coast so dreaded came howling in from the southeast, the storm-quarter of that country. For two days and nights in the guest-lodge where Negouac had joined them they listened to the deafening crash of the wind and waves. At one point far out at sea



a vast tide-rip formed where the gale at its height met the ebb-tide. Prisoned between tide and wind and reef the waves rose in vast breakers forty feet high crowned by clouds of spray and spume. In a dreadful dance they whirled around and around like vast sea-sprites and moved rhythmically back and forth, while the shout of their mighty voices could be heard for miles inland as they dashed into the narrow gut and broke against the face of the dark cliffs. The spray flew a hundred feet high over the top of the cliff and beat against the skin-covering of the teepee like driven snow.

"The Sea Chiefs dance their death-dance to-night," said Negouac, peering out through the slitted opening. "Sometimes," he went on, turning to the boys, "great medicine-man go down and dance with them. My grandfather see one paddle out on night like this, jump into water, grow tall as Sea Chiefs and dance round and round with them all night long while tribe watch from top of cliffs. In morning when he come back no one dare speak to him."



"Heaven help any man or ship either that has to dance with them devils to-night," said old Jud, peering out over the chief's shoulder.

"This boy he dance with them to-morrow," said Negouac, putting his hand on Will's shoulder.

"What do you mean?" asked old Jud, while Will looked startled in spite of his best efforts to appear unconcerned.

"Yes," said the Eskimo, "to-morrow be good kahlan weather."

Then the chief went on to explain how the sea-otter was hunted. In the old times, he told them, it had been so common that not only chiefs but even ordinary Indians wore cloaks made of the lustrous, shimmering, ebony-black fur, the rarest and most valuable in the world. Then came the fatal day when that cruel Russian, Feodor Altasov, with a band of Cossacks and Tartars, discovered and won for the Russian Empire the great Kamchatkan Peninsula. There they found sea-otter by the thousand. Even then their pelts brought such prices that in a few years the fierce fur-hunters had killed and driven away from the penin-



sula nearly all of the otter-colonies. They stripped the living natives of every scrap of otter-fur and even rifled the graves of dead chiefs who had been buried in their fur parkas. Then building rude wooden boats they sailed across a dark and dangerous sea and discovered the Aleutian Islands and the Alaska Peninsula. There the fur-hunters enslaved the ancestors of the Free People and sent them out in bands to hunt the sea-otter. Up and down a thousand miles of rock-bound coast they drove them relentlessly. Night and day they hunted for their masters, storm-beaten, starving and freezing. On desolate islands with the thermometer below zero they would hunt for weeks at a time without fire, for the smoke of a fire drives away all otter within a range of four or five miles. At many points they were forced to fight for their lives with the fierce Koloshian tribes who allowed no strangers to hunt in their territory. Less than half of the Indian hunters came back alive from this terrible half-year hunt. Under the leadership of one of their chiefs the warriors who were left fought their way out with their



women and children and found their way to Akotan, where they became the Free People. The entrance to its single harbor was so narrow and well-guarded and the mountains in the interior offered so many hiding places that the fur-traders had never been able to again enslave them.

The boys never forgot Negouac's story that night, of the sufferings, the flight and the victory of the tribe punctuated by the mutter of the volcano and the mighty voices of the dreadful breakers.

Then he told them of the spearing surround which he remembered as a boy. All the hunters of the tribe would paddle in a long line, if the weather were calm, toward two small islands far out at sea. The grounds reached, they would scan every foot of the water ahead of them. At last some one would see the blunt head of a sea-otter as it rose to the surface. Only for a second would the shy animal remain up. Instantly he who had caught a glimpse of it would raise his paddle at the spot where the otter had dived, and the rest of the band would make a great circle



around the place. For fifteen or twenty minutes they would wait until some one caught a glimpse of the otter coming to the surface again for air. Immediately with a shout they would drive him under again and start a new circle. For hours the hunt would go on with the otter staying under a shorter and shorter time after each dive. At last he would fail to go under at all and became the prize of him whose spear first pierced the long lithe body. If the weather were rough surf-shooting was the method used. Patrolling the surf just off the islands the successful hunters were those who were able to pierce with an arrow the bobbing head of a sea-otter in the waves fifty yards away. It would seem an impossible feat to accomplish from a plunging bidarka, yet a good hunter would hit that small mark three times out of four. Later the body of the otter which had been killed would be found rolled up by the surf on the nearby beach.

As the sea-otter became shyer and fewer both of these methods had been given up many years ago. Nowadays they were only hunted



during storms. Then driven by the great waves the otter would take refuge in a series of islets and reefs just showing above the water where, burying their heads in sea-weed or in tossing beds of kelp, they would sleep out the storm. It was only then that a hunter, daring enough to risk his life in the waves, might approach them. Even of the most noted hunters few of them lived to make many trips. In order to be successful it was necessary to reach the tiny outer islands at the very height of the storm, for as soon as the wind and the waves went down the otters would return to deep water. Even if the bidarkas were not swamped or wrecked on hidden reefs there was always the danger of missing the islands altogether and being carried out into the open sea from whence there was no returning.

There was a long silence after the chief had explained simply why so few of the tribe qualified as otter-hunters. It was old Jud who spoke first.

"Fellows," he said, "I'm the oldest one here, though not so very old at that," and he looked sternly at Joe. "This otter-hunt is off.



I 'm not goin' back to Cornwall an' tell Bill's family that I let him go fishin' for otters in a hurricane."

"It's too late," said Will. "I can't back out now. We can't afford to fall down on the very first test."

Jud looked around the little circle but received no encouragement. Joe only nodded at Will's last words.

"He could n't be a quitter," murmured Fred, while Negouac's face was as impassive as usual.

"I 'm goin' myself," declared the old man finally. "I 've just remembered I used to be some otter-hunter an' I don't want you kids to have all the glory."

Will patted the old trapper's back.

"It can't be did, Jud," he said softly. "I promised to do this—and I will. You save yourself for killer-whales."

Nothing more was said, and before long they were all asleep. It seemed to Will only a few minutes later, although many hours had passed, when the chief woke him up. At the water's edge, crouched down in the sand, with



their backs to the howling gale they found the two hunters, Alunak and Alnitam. Both were wiry, dark and small and neither of them spoke much English. Alunak was the older of the two and knew the channels, currents, reefs and bars of the great bay better than any man in the tribe, while Alnitam who was to paddle bow could recognize the black bobbing head of an otter a thousand feet away. Hauled well up on the sand beyond the reach of the waves was the bidarka in which they were to make the voyage, made of untanned sea-lion's skins, stretched and sewed over a light strong frame-work of cedar and whale-bone. The little boat was decked over with skins as taut as the parchment of a well-strung bass drum and smeared all over with thick sea-oil so that it was really made up of four air-chambers separated by the three cockpits in which the paddlers sat and was as unsinkable as any craft could be. Launching the bidarka in a bit of comparatively smooth water it was held until the paddlers had taken their places and were laced in. Each of them was equipped with a short heavy club and a



long double-bladed paddle. For a second Negouac held the boat in balance. Then as Will waved a good-bye it shot out into the rush and foam and smother of the storm. The inner reefs were roaring like a battle and the great and fearful voices of the Sea Chiefs sounded through the mists. Favored by wind and tide the little cockle-shell of a boat leaped through the blowing vapors like a flying-fish. Will had never imagined anything like the absolute skill and balance of his companions. For a while he could see nothing but a whirling white waste of waters. At times the little boat would be far up on the very crest of some mighty swell and he could see the cliffs and the peaks and the miles of torn water ahead. Then with the rush of a toboggan it would shoot deep down the slope into a boiling cauldron of white water rimmed around with black-green tossing walls that threatened to engulf them, but marvelously never did. Through it all Alunak and Alnitam never missed a stroke. Always just at the right moment the deft beat of their paddle would send the bidarka spinning out of the boiling depths



and up again to the crest of some huge roller. Not always did they escape untouched. Twice in the welter and whirl of cross-seas a crashing wave drove boat and crew down under tons of falling water. Each time the bidarka bobbed up like a cork although the last time Will was gasping hard for breath before he reached the surface.

At last their course led them directly across one end of the line of reefs among which the swift and deadly breakers shouted and danced. For an instant Akotan, the foremost hunter, turned and looked searchingly at Will. Then down from the crest of a towering wave on a long hundred foot slant the little boat shot where the white waves towered and vanished like ghosts. The water in front of them, lashed to a foam, was snow-white. Suddenly from out of the mists with a roar like an earthquake one of the vast breakers rushed from the inner dance of death to meet them. Fifty feet high the monster towered. It whirled and darted backwards and forwards as if keeping time to the shouting of that fatal inner circle of its brethren. Driven on by the roaring



gale and tide it was impossible to stop the bidarka nor could they veer save slightly from their course and strike the narrow channel ahead which was the only safe passage to the outer waters. As the great sea chief approached them in a whirling circle the two Indians did a curious thing. From out of the weltering waters they raised their paddles aloft for an instant in salute. Then with a quick movement Akotan produced from the folds of his parka a little skin bag of the thick seal-oil and swiftly poured it into the troubled water just beyond the little craft. Like magic the tossing, foaming water ahead smoothed and a shining slick of oil spread toward the advancing breaker. Under its film the water remained unbroken. When at last its edge touched the flank of the giant breaker, the chief of the sea moved backwards as if accepting and honoring an offerings. Although Will knew that the oil had only for a moment turned aside the twist of the current in another direction, yet it looked uncannily like magic. Out across the slick into the raging waters beyond they all paddled desperately. As they



safely reached the little passage which led out into the open bay Will glanced back for an instant. Just where they had been no less than three of the monstrous breakers were now whirling and shouting with dreadful glee.

They had safely passed the first and worst stretch of their twenty-mile voyage. The risk now was that the steersman might miss his course. A few feet one way or the other might either wreck them on a fatal reef or send them driving hopelessly into the open sea beyond. To Will bruised, drenched, beaten and breathless by the raging waters through which they had passed, it seemed incredible that any one could see any marks or ranges whatever by which to steer. Old Alunak, however, held his course unfalteringly. Somewhere amid the waste of waters tiny points of rock showed or there were glimpses of dim islands from which he took his bearings. Under the flashing paddle-strokes the little bidarka fairly leaped across the water. As they dashed through the heart of the storm there was a thrill in Will's blood which he had never known before. So must the Vikings of



long ago have felt when they won their way through unknown waters and made storm and sea yield to their will.

Ahead of them miles of dark sea showed through the thinning mists and it seemed as if the dangers of the voyage were passed. Suddenly little Akotan at the bow gave a strangled shout and tried with all his might to hold back the speeding bidarka. Down from the black overcast sky directly ahead of them stretched a vast dark tentacle. At first it looked like some great cloud-wreath. Then it lengthened and lengthened into a column of black whirling water that wavered from out of the depths of the sky as if searching for something. Suddenly with a sucking, thudding watery roar up from the sea itself there rose a column to meet it. Around and around it whirled and roared, stretching higher and higher until it towered up a hundred feet with a bellow that could be heard even above the tumult of the storm. Up and up it rose waving dreadfully in the wind but driven ever skyward by some invisible power. In an instant the searching, groping figure from the sky stretched down to



meet it and with a crash the two vast fountains joined together and Will watched the dreadful march of a waterspout across the sea. There was an unearthly horror about it such as accompanies an earthquake or the eruption of a volcano. To the Indians it was the visible Spirit of the Sea itself moving down to meet them. They bowed their heads and began a fear-broken chant. As the dreadful roar of the approaching column sounded nearer and nearer the Indians bent forward with arms outstretched babbling in mortal terror. As it came close the lower column of water showed a dark, tawny, muddy hue. The tremendous force of the waterspout had siphoned up the water from the lowest depths and was whirling up the mud from the seabottom a thousand feet below. Will paddled desperately alone to cross its path before the monster reached them.

"Paddle! Paddle!" he shouted to the hunters who still were stretched forward with closed eyes invoking the mercy of the fierce elemental which had come upon them. Swinging his paddle forward he poked Alni-



tam vigorously in the back and with a reversed swing rapped old Alunak on the top of his head.

"Paddle for your lives!" he shouted again. The shouts and the pokes seemed to rouse the Indians and with eyes closed that they might not look upon the Spirit of the Deep, they paddled with all their might. Once again the little bidarka fled on its way. As the towering column neared them the gale died down as if yielding to a power greater than its own might. With quick, flashing strokes the three paddled as they had never paddled before. For a minute it seemed as if the roaring spout would engulf them before they could cross the line along which it was traveling with tremendous speed. Just, however, as it seemed as though they must be caught and whirled to a strange death in the sky, they passed beyond the outer fringe of the roaring waters. So close, however, had been their escape that one of the slender shafts of water which rose from the sea beyond the main column, struck against them and only the skill and strength of the Indians kept them still above water.



Roaring dreadfully the waterspout passed on and before long was lost in the mists that hung deep around the shores from which they had come.

"Great Chief of the Ocean go to dance with Sea Chiefs," old Alunak muttered a moment later.

Without further adventure they reached the tiny distant outlying islands, the last known haunt of the sea-otter. Passing to the leeward of these they found themselves for the first time that day in comparatively calm water. Directly ahead of them was a great bed of kelp. The snaky, golden-brown tendrils and hollow stems matted together made a tossing carpet that covered the sea for thousands of square feet. The air was full of the roar of the tempest and vibrated with the booming of the waves against the granite cliffs. All at once with a sweep of his paddle which bent his lithe muscular body almost double, Alnitam in the bow brought the bidarka up standing and pointed to a place in the waving kelp nearest to where Will was sitting. There not two yards away on the tossing sea-wrack was



the most beautiful animal that the boy had ever seen. As it lay stretched out on its back at full length it was nearly five feet long. Every line of its long slim body was lithe and graceful as it swung back and forth with the pitch and swell of the water. Clasped tight to her breast was the single cub which a mother sea-otter bears. It was only about a foot in length and had a coat of coarse, brownish grizzled hair while its little round head was brindled and its tiny nose which from time to time nuzzled into its mother's warm breast was whitish-gray. The round head of the mother-otter was burrowed into the kelp and fearing no foe in the tempest she lay there with her cub, sleeping out the storm. With the utmost care old Alunak and Alnitam with every muscle tense and alert pushed the bi-darka up noiselessly until Will was right over the little sleeping family. At the first sight of the prize he had grasped the short heavy club which is the only weapon used in this kind of hunting. Even as he looked, however, the mother-otter with a little affectionate gesture clasped her cub tighter in her arms and



wrapped him closer in her long silky fur. It was such fur as Will had never even imagined. Black as night, yet it had a shimmer and a ripple which passed through it like the changing tints in watered silk. It was a pelt with which a man might ransom his life or give to a king. Few indeed have been the living men who have ever even seen what one blow would make Will's very own. The nearest trading station would pay thousands of dollars for it untanned and unstretched. Yet as Will looked down upon the sleeping mother and her little one it was as if the great wild Sea had taken him into her confidence and trusted to him her sleeping children. He could no more have killed that otter-mother sleeping there before him with her dear-loved cub in her arms than he could have struck down a human child entrusted to his care. The Indians began to be impatient and seeing that Will hesitated old Alunak raised his paddle to drive his end of the bidarka near enough for a fatal blow. Then it was that Will gave up the chance for which he had traveled so far and endured so much. With a quick



motion he touched the nearest hind-paw of the sleeping animal with the end of the club. It was enough. With one arrowy, lithe movement the otter curved herself under the kelp with her cub in her arms and was gone in a flash. There was a horrified gasp from both of the Indians as they turned fiercely upon Will. It was beyond all their understanding that the white boy should endure dangers such as none other in their tribe had dared and then forego the reward, for the hunter who brought back a sea-otter was always made a member of the Order of the Bear and privileged every year to go to Goreloi. Will met their fierce looks unflinchingly and tried to explain to them in sign-language that he felt that it would have been wrong for him to have killed the sleeping otter and her cub. Measuring with both hands in the air the little length of the cub he pointed to the sky and shook his head. At once the Indians came to the conclusion that to Will otter-cubs were taboo. Every Indian is familiar with the doctrine of the taboo under which he believes that the killing, eating, or even touching of certain articles is



forbidden and is convinced that the breaking of a taboo is not only wrong but is always attended with some great misfortune. So, although bitterly disappointed they went on with the hunt without questioning further his reasons for allowing the mother otter and her cub to escape, although if an ordinary member of the tribe had done this he would have been promptly tossed overboard.

Here and there, back and forth through all the tossing, waving kelp-beds the hunters searched but without a sight of another of the otter-folk. It began to look as if all of the dangers of the trip had been endured for nothing and the faces of the Indians grew more and more somber. At last they landed upon one of the little islands itself. It was a mass of huddled rocks thickly carpeted with seaweed and wet and slippery and covered with foam where the lashing waves during the height of the storm had broken over. Around its edge ran a tiny beach. Pulling the bidarka well up beyond the reach of the waves the hunters separated to beat across every foot of the islet. Up and down the slippery, weed-



covered rocks Will searched but found nothing except a few of the enormous sluggish crabs as big as a wash-basin which live in those waters. He finally reached a spot where a tiny bay broke the circumference of the coast. All at once down the slope of a high rock he saw a black figure flashing toward him through the green weed along a narrow path which led from the rocks directly to the beach behind him and in the very middle of which he was standing. On either side of Will were heaped up slippery boulders higher than his head. As the animal drew nearer he saw that it was an enormous dog-otter hurrying down the rocks to take refuge in the deep water. Down the slope and down the path undeviatingly with pattering steps the long, black body writhed along on its short legs like a hunting snake. A sea-otter will always take to water by the nearest route and turns out for no one, large or small. This one was almost upon Will before he realized what it was. The black silky hair bristled until the body of the otter looked like an enormous swollen cylinder surmounted by a fierce, little globe-shaped



head. The beast bared its peculiar flat teeth and from the center of the perfectly round head a pair of black snaky eyes gleamed vindictively as with a grating snarl it sprang for the throat-hold, the favorite of all the weasel-family. Once before Will had fought for his life with that grim weasel of the North, the fatal carcajou, and was not to be daunted by any of the lesser members of that fierce family. As the otter sprang he turned sideways, swinging his heavy club with all his might. It landed directly in the center of the globe-shaped head. The skull shattered like an egg under the force of the blow, and the otter fell dead across Will's feet with scarcely a quiver. When Will tried to lift it up by the nape of its neck the loose pelt stretched out nearly a foot from the body and it was not until he gripped the tiny fore-feet, so short that they looked as if the paws came directly out of the skin, that he was able to swing the heavy body across his shoulders. As he finally succeeded the heads of the two Indians appeared over the rocks above. The sight of Will's prize was too much for even their



stoicism. With a shout they scrambled down and helped him carry it to the bidarka. There they measured it carefully with their paddles on which were notched the length of every sea-otter secured by them on previous hunts. From nose to tail Will's prize was a good six inches longer than any other.

The voyage home was as safe and easy as the outward trip had been perilous. When at last the returning bidarka was sighted the whole tribe gathered together to await its coming, and when they landed on the beach willing hands pulled their craft far up on the sand. With the hunters' help Will shouldered the great sea-otter, grim even in death, and followed by the whole tribe at a respectful distance moved in solemn procession to the Shuman's lodge. In front of them Will marched alone. Not even Jud and Joe were permitted to walk by his side. Outside of the lodge the tribe gathered while Will and the two hunters entered. In the gloom and the flickering fire-light Will stood once more before the Great Chief himself. With impassive face he listened while old Alunak, bend-



ing low before him, told the story of the quest and how Will had not flinched during the storm nor before the dreadful dance of the Sea Chiefs, and how he had killed single-handed the chief of the sea-otters. When Alunak had finished the old chief opened his eyes and looked questioningly towards Alnitam.

“It is true,” said the hunter, trembling.

For a moment the Great Chief looked searchingly at Will. Then standing up he suddenly slipped over his head a little leather thong to which was fastened a vast, curved, keen bear-claw of such a size as Will had never dreamed existed. Allowing for the curve it was a full five inches in length. As the Shuman passed the thong over Will's bowed head he muttered first in Indian and then in English “Be brave! be brave! be brave!”



## CHAPTER VII

### THE TESTING OF JUD

**I**T was the second day after the otter hunt and Will was still stiff and lame from his stormy voyage to the outer islands. Since he had come back with the otter and wore the Bear-Claw he found that the tribe treated him differently. The children followed him in the streets of the village, and braves and squaws alike came to the doors of their tepees to watch him as he went by. Even proud old Haidahn, who ranked next to the Shuman himself, showed him much respect. The climax came late one afternoon. As Will came to the tepee, Joe and Jud and Fred, who had been sprawling on the grass outside, jumped to their feet and took off their hats, while old Jud, bowing low, held back the skin-flap that served as a door.

“What’s the matter with you fellows, anyway?” shouted Will, wrathfully, as he went



through the doorway, giving the bowing Jud a push that made him sit down suddenly.

"Hero," said Fred, as they trooped in after him, making a low salaam.

"Great Chief!" exclaimed Jud, throwing himself flat on the ground and burying his face in his hands.

"Big Shuman," grunted Joe, standing on his head and kicking his legs respectfully in the air.

It was too much for Will.

"I 'll shuman you!" he yelled, grabbing Joe's waving legs and landing him on Jud with a bump that knocked the breath out of the old trapper. Then he seized Fred, intending to rub his nose on the floor. With a quick tackle, the latter dived under his arms and, grabbing him just back of the knees, tipped him over on top of the other pair. Thereupon all three clutched Will and commenced to roll him over and over on the dirt floor, shouting at the top of their voices, "Hero! Chief! Shuman!"

"Ouch!" shrieked Will. "Leg'go, you're smotherin' me! Help!"



Just then the flap was pulled to one side and Negouac came in. Seeing his Brother-of-the-Bear seemingly fighting for his life, he seized a heavy war-club which swung from the lodge-pole and started to the rescue. Fortunately, as Will came to the surface on one of his rolls, an unoccupied eye caught sight of the chief and his uplifted club.

"Hi! hold on! Don't kill 'em, Chief," he bellowed, so loudly that Negouac stopped in the very act of bringing his club down where it would do the most good. Thereupon the struggling heap untangled, while Jud tried to explain matters.

"It's this way, Chief," he began; "we're just common folks who haven't killed sea-otters, and we were trying to show our respect to this great shuman."

Negouac looked inquiringly at Will, still gripping his club threateningly.

"It's all right," said the latter; "they don't know any better. Nothing there but the white stuff you get from walrus tusks," and he tapped his head and pointed sadly to the other three. "If they ever get rough like that again," he



went on, brushing off his clothes, "you just bump 'em a few with that good club of yours—but don't kill 'em."

It took some time to convince Negouac that this was the way white men played.

"They feel bad," ended Will, "because they're not brave and handsome and famous like you and me. They want to be Brothers-of-the-Bear, too."

"They have chance," said Negouac, grimly. "To-morrow we go hunt old Three-toes. He man-killer bear," he explained. "Lost two toes in trap many years ago. Ever since he kill man whenever he find him. Last year we lose three hunters."

The boys looked at each other.

"This is your job," said Will at last. "I'll go along and see that you work right."

"Yes," grunted Jud, "a poor little sea-otter is about your limit!"

The next morning on the beach in front of Negouac's lodge they met the two hunters, Tilgalda and Saanak, who, with Negouac, were to go with them. Around the neck of each one swung the same kind of fierce, curved



claw which Will and Negouac wore and which the boys had seen around the necks of Alunak and Alnitam before they knew what they meant.

Tilgalda was a forest Indian, probably a Cree or Chippeway. With his brother he had joined the Free People of the island years ago, coming from no one knew where. Although heavily built, he had a lithe look and moved like a flash. His jet-black hair was parted in the middle, and he had far-apart eyes and a broad forehead, with thin lips and a big jaw. His face was terribly scarred and his neck had been twisted so that his head looked uncannily over his left shoulder.

While the two hunters were getting their equipment together, Negouac told the boys the story of Tilgalda. While hunting, a day's journey back in the island, he had been attacked by a grizzly which he had fatally wounded. With one blow, it sent him spinning ten feet through the air and then, springing on him, seized his head and neck in its great jaws and shook him as a dog would shake a rat. Just as its fierce teeth were about



to crush together, the bear fell over dead from the effects of its wounds. When Tilgalda at last came to, he found himself under the dead bear, with his scalp and throat horribly torn. When at last the wound healed, his neck and head were twisted and turned and bent for the rest of his life.

He was still laid up with his wounds, when his brother was killed by old Three-toes, the man-killer, while dozing one night in front of his own camp-fire.

From that day Tilgalda hunted bears and nothing else. Twelve grizzlies he had killed single-handed and let them lie as they fell, unskinned and untouched, in part payment for the death of his brother. Many, many times he had trailed Three-toes through the seventy-five square miles of territory in which the old murderer had lived for nearly a generation, but so far he had never yet been able to corner the fierce, wary animal, which went on taking his toll year after year of the lives and cattle of the Free People.

Saanak, the second hunter, was different from any of the rest of the tribe. His face,



broader than his head, looked like that of an Eskimo; but instead of having the seal-brown eyes and black hair of that people, his eyes were blue and his hair and beard of a golden-red. Moreover, instead of being squat and short, like an Eskimo, he was so tall and well built that he seemed a giant among the others.

Years later, Will found out that Saanak was one of the blond Eskimos from Victoria Island far away in the frozen North. A thousand years ago, Eric the Red sailed from Iceland and discovered Greenland. There he founded a colony which flourished on the southwestern coast of Greenland until the Black Death in the fourteenth century swept the shipping of the world from off the seas and the colony was lost for a hundred years. When it was found again, the people had disappeared, merged in Eskimo tribes which wandered up until they settled on Victoria Island.

Saanak had about him something of the strength and gloom of those Norse Vikings whose blood ran in his veins, and the boys noticed two lines of tattooing running from



the corners of his mouth to the lobes of his ears. These marks, Negouac told the boys, showed that he had killed a whale single-handed. Both Negouac himself and Tilgalda had faint tattoo marks running from nose to ear. He who was so marked had killed a hostile warrior in fair fight. So Will learned after much questioning of the old chief.

"I thought there was no more fighting up here nowadays," said Will.

"The Free People must always fight," returned Negouac. "Fight to keep free. Sometimes," he went on after a pause, "we fight for our lives over there," pointing toward the north and touching the Bear-Claw with his other hand. Nothing more would he say.

Before the Indians started, they went through a curious ceremony which was new even to Joe and Jud. First they painted a cross of red and black on their foreheads, the mark of a war-party. Then Negouac brought from his lodge the skin of a great grizzly and spread it on the sand. Around this all of the hunters walked backward, chanting as they



went. Then each one of them in turn took from out of his pouch a crooked copper knife, tempered by an art which has been lost to the white race since the Stone Age. These they laid one after the other on the head of the skin. Then they circled it once more in the opposite direction, chanting all the while. Even Joe, Indian born as he was, could not explain this ceremony. On their way back to the lodge for the guns they asked Negouac what it meant. The old chief was amazed at their ignorance.

"White man know nothing about hunting," he said at last. "Animals stronger and wiser than men. Only let themselves be killed if man give them what they like best. Seals," he went on, "live in salt water and always thirsty. If Indian kill seal, he pour cup of fresh water in seal's mouth. Other seals hear about it and let Indian kill them. Old man bear, he very fond of crooked knives. Before we hunt bear we promise to hang knives around his skin, so we find bear easy."

At last the party started. Besides the four Indians and the four whites, there were two powerful, broad-chested, white-toothed



huskies, or Eskimo dogs, with slanting eyes who were guaranteed to fight a bear to the death. A couple of Indian ponies were taken along, too; wiry, swift little bronchos, of which there were many in the tribe. One of these was used for a packhorse, the other was ridden by Jud, whose legs were not what they used to be. Jud and the boys wore soft deerskin shirts and trousers ornamented with beads and stained porcupine-quills, which had been presented to them by admiring Indian friends, and tough, supple moccasins made of the skin of sea-lions' flippers.

It was a strange, grim country which stretched before them after they left the coast. Ledges of jagged rocks, huge boulders, dead tree-trunks and towering trees, deep gorges and crevasses, were jumbled and tumbled together in wild confusion. Through these the party climbed and crawled and slid by paths known only to the hunters. Beyond them in the interior of the island towered snow-covered mountains to be surmounted only by first passing over vast morasses crossed only by secret paths. All day they traveled fast and far,



and every hour the country grew wilder and more sinister. At times they would peer over the edges of dizzy precipices flanked by slopes covered with huge rocks, great pines, and masses of tangled thickets. Nowhere was there a sign of life. Yet a sense of menace and a whisper of death seemed to float up from many of the dark ravines which their path overhung.

Not until the middle of the afternoon was any stop made for food. By this time they had reached a little valley set in the very heart of the mountains. Here Negouac proceeded to make a fire after the fashion of his tribe. Taking a fragment of iron pyrites from his pouch, he spread over a piece of flint a light covering of down. Striking this a few glancing blows with the other stone, he made such a shower of sparks that the feathery tinder kindled instantly with a smudgy smell. With this he lighted the fire about as quickly as Will could have done with a match.

After lunch they followed a dim trail up the valley. Suddenly Negouac, who was leading, stopped and pointed to a track in the



soft ground. It was something like the mark of a very broad human foot with a wrinkled fold of skin showing about the middle of the sole and a narrow, pointed heel.

"Nannuk!" whispered the old chief and the Indian hunters nodded their heads.

"That grizzly-trail," whispered Joe. "Heel comes to a point, while black-bear heel more round and whole foot not as slender."

Suddenly Tilgalda, who had been looking beyond, pointed to a spot far up the trail. There in the long grass was crouched a big grizzly. His coat was a light brown sprinkled with gray, about matching in color an enormous ant-hill which towered up in front of him. Into this he would plunge first one paw and then the other, and, waiting until it was covered with ants, would pull it out and lick off the swarming insects with great relish.

"Leave this chap to me," insisted old Jud in a whisper. "I'll show you how we used to hunt grizzlies on horseback."

The Indians looked questioningly at Will, who, since he wore the Bear-Claw, they seemed to regard as the leader of his party.



"Go as far as you like," he said to Jud. "We'll stay back and get some points from you."

The wind was blowing toward the hunters, and this overlord of all the animals of the island went on with his feeding, unconscious that there was anything big enough or fierce enough to attack him. In the late afternoon sunlight he seemed a slow, sluggish, shambling figure. Yet when he stood up and shuffled from side to side, there was a suggestion of enormous power and perfect balance in his movements which should have warned the old trapper to take no chances. Jud rode up to within about sixty yards of the preoccupied bear and then got off his horse, throwing the reins over the pony's head so that they touched the ground. Indian ponies, like the cattle ponies, are trained to stand, no matter what happens, so long as the reins dangle over their heads. With the utmost caution the old man tiptoed about ten yards away from the horse toward the back of the unconscious animal. Taking deliberate aim, he fired, intending to place a soft-nosed, expanding bullet in the



very center of the bear's spine just between his bulging shoulders.

Unfortunately for him, just as he pulled the trigger, the bear suddenly leaned forward to sink his paw deeper into the ant-hill, with the result that the bullet cut through the loose skin of the back, making a searing, smarting gash which in nowise interfered with the monster's movements. The bear was sixty yards away, with his back toward the man who had only ten yards to go to reach the safety of his pony. At the sting of the bullet, and almost before the sound of the report reached the ears of the hunters beyond, the great animal leaped and whirled in mid-air, facing the direction of the shot, and with a bawling roar charged down on Jud like an avalanche. With head thrust forward and flattened ears, he champed his teeth until the froth flew in great flakes, while his eyes glared furiously.

*"Hough! Hough! Hough!"* he roared, like a lion, as he came. His gait was something between a lope and a plunging gallop but carried him over the ground with the speed of a race-horse.



Old Jud took one look at what was coming and instantly saw his mistake. If he had shot at the bear from a distance of a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards, there would have been time to stop his charge. Now, even if he were successful in landing a bullet in the heart or the brain of the rushing animal, yet the fury of his charge would enable him to get his vast curved claws on Jud before he dropped. There was but one thing to do. Jud did it. Dropping his rifle, he started for his horse like a sprinter breaking off his marks. If the pony had stampeded, Jud's life would not have been worth a counterfeit cent. Fortunately for him, the sweating, trembling little broncho was true to his training. Not until the dragging reins were lifted off the ground would he move. Before the man, sprinting for his life, could reach the horse, the terrible rush of the charging bear had carried him so close that the hunters behind dared not fire. Jud had no time even to vault into the saddle. Leaving the ground with a dive he landed across the saddle on his stomach, clutching the girth with one hand and seizing the reins with



the other, while his legs waved frantically as he tried to balance himself. The broncho started with the sudden speed of his breed.

Quick as he was, however, the shambling monster behind him was quicker, and in a second the vast shoulders and the fierce, snarling, frothing jaws were right at the pony's flank. Only the peculiar method of attack of a grizzly saved the lives of horse and rider. A charging grizzly never bites, but depends upon the smashing, ripping blows of its enormous forearms, which it always rears up on its hindquarters to deliver, using its teeth only when its opponent is down. True to form, the old bear reared upon its haunches and struck at the flank of the flying pony with all its power. The tiny tick of time which the bear took to rear back was all that saved the horse. The blow flashed past the springing hindlegs of the broncho by a scant inch. Once more the bear rushed up, and, with the same little pause of preparation, struck again. Once more the flashing legs of the pony carried him out of danger, this time with a wider margin of safety. At the third attempt the bear



missed the horse by more than a foot. By this time the running broncho had reached his top speed, which was a little faster than the bear's gait. For a hundred yards farther the chase went on. Then the bear, seeing himself hopelessly out-distanced, plunged into a thicket and disappeared in the direction of the nearest mountain.

Throughout the whole race Jud had held on for dear life, keeping his place in the saddle by a miracle, his legs flying and flopping in the air at every jump of the racing horse, while his toes curled convulsively each time that the fierce head of the bear appeared under them. At first the boys were horrified at Jud's danger, but when they saw that he was safe they roared with delight at his acrobatic riding. Even the impassive Indians grinned at the sight of those waving legs. Seeing that the bear no longer followed him, Jud at last managed to climb into the saddle and, recovering his rifle, rode back to the party who were waiting for him.

"That's the way to do it, boys," he explained kindly as he joined them. "Always



make a quick get-away if you find you can't stop him comin'."

"That sure was a quick get-away," agreed Will solemnly, "but none too quick at that."

"What I did n't like," broke in Fred, "was his stopping to play see-saw while the bear was coming. That seemed kind of reckless to me."

"No," joined in Joe, without a smile, "old Jud he like to ride on his stomach. He stay on better that way."

That night they pitched their camp among a clump of spruce trees at the bottom of a deep ravine. The crackling flames leaped up among the shifting shadows, and far away, over the dark peaks behind them, came a long howl with something of menace in its wailing notes. As it rose and swelled nearer and nearer, the picketed horses snorted uneasily and the two dogs, which had been lying out in the dark, trotted into the firelight and curled up close to the men. Negouac told them that it was the howl of a pack of hunting timber-wolves.

"Gee!" said Fred, sinking his teeth deep into a strip of broiled elk-steak, which they



had brought along as part of their supplies, "this is the life! I've seen a grizzly bear and heard a pack of wolves and am eating a piece of elk. I did n't know that there was so much fun left in the world. Me for camp-fires and hunts and adventures."

"That's it, boy," said Jud. "You once get a taste of wild life and you'll never be satisfied with tame life. I've been a-hikin' and a-huntin' and a-wanderin' for a good many years, and I like it better and better all the time. It beats me how folks can stay cooped up in cities when they might be out in the open."

The next morning they were up before dawn. They breakfasted on broiled, dried white-fish, that fish of frosted silver, the pride of the North. It never bites at bait, but must always be netted, and the Indians and the few white men who have tasted it agree that there is no fish in the world to equal it for flavor and nourishment. Old Negouac brewed a great pot of fragrant Labrador tea, that plant with the spicy, aromatic, leather-covered leaf which tastes so good when steeped.



The trail led deeper and deeper into the mountains, and by this time they were in the very center and heart of the bear country. Far in front of them against the sky towered a vast snow-covered peak which looked like a mountain of glass under the morning sun. Their trail led through wooded slopes and up and up and up until they reached a point where drifts of snow showed everywhere. All about them were tumbled masses of rocks and slides and clay-covered ridges. Suddenly from all around them sounded a series of shrill policemen's whistles.

"Whistlers," explained Jud, as the boys looked at him inquiringly. A moment later they saw one perched on top of a near-by boulder. It was the hoary marmot, an animal much like the eastern woodchuck, but twice as large and with a silvery-gray fur. A short distance beyond, they came to a place where a grizzly had dug out a colony of marmots. Over two car-loads of rocks and boulders and stone and gravel had been piled up until the digging animal had made a crater some eight feet deep. At the bottom of this he had finally



unearthed the grass-lined cave built between two great flat rocks where the marmot family had made their home. Smears of blood and long claw-marks in the clay, with patches of gray fur here and there, showed where the frightened whistlers had been caught and killed one after the other as they tried to scramble up the side of the pit. Five in all had been killed and eaten. A mile or so beyond, nearly an acre of ground was torn and ploughed and pitted as if prospectors had been mining there. The place marked where another grizzly had spent hours in digging up and eating greedily the little bulbs of the spring beauty, or *Claytonia*, which in spring covered the mountainside in pink-and-white sheets.

Late that afternoon they camped beside a clattering, rushing, foaming stream which had its source in a glacier ten miles away. While the boys were getting the fire ready, Jud strolled away to do a bit of exploring, smoking his pipe and followed by the two dogs. As he walked and smoked, with the dogs sniffing at his heels, he saw in front of him what at



first seemed to be a thick black stump. All at once its top seemed to move, and to his astonishment he saw that it was another bear, grubbing up roots. The dogs saw the bear as soon as he, and, with barks and yelps, started for it at full speed. Jud followed, expecting to see the bear take to a tree, as a black bear always does when closely pressed by dogs. This bear, however, neither fought, ran, nor climbed, but moved off with a shambling, effortless gait. Jud was armed with nothing bigger than a jackknife, but, snatching up a stick, rushed toward the bear shouting, while the dogs barked as they ran. Instead of taking to a tree, the bear suddenly turned and made a pass at the nearest dog, missing it by scarcely an inch. For the first time Jud noticed that it was half again as large as any black bear he had ever seen.

"This climate sure must agree with bears," he remarked to himself as he hurried on.

After this warning to its pursuers, the bear moved steadily through the brush, with the yelping dogs closing in on it closer and closer. At last it came to where two large trees had



fallen one above the other, their crossed trunks making a sort of pen open only on one side. Into this the bear pushed his way, and, seeing its path blocked by the tree trunks, suddenly turned like a flash and rushed directly at Jud. As it turned and Jud caught a sight of its bared teeth, he realized for the first time what he was up against. The incisors of the upper jaw were nearly as long as the two pointed canine teeth. This double set of fighting teeth in the upper jaw is the sign and seal of the grizzly bear. If anything more was needed to convince Jud that this jet-black animal was really a grizzly, it was the sight of his claws. No black bear ever had sets of the four-inch, keen, chiseling talons which were so rapidly approaching the old trapper. For the second time that day he started to run, but before he had gone three steps, caught his foot in a concealed root and plunged headlong. He had just time to turn over on his back and draw up his feet when the bear was almost on him. The great beast heaved itself up to strike.

At that desperate moment the two dogs lived



up to their reputation as reliable bear-dogs who would follow and fight until either they or the bear were dead. Just as Jud braced himself to receive what he expected would be his death-blow, both dogs fastened on to either side of the bear's hind quarters. Their keen teeth pierced the tough skin and tore into the living flesh so excruciatingly that the bear turned upon them even in the very act of striking. As it pivoted, the two dogs dodged back just in time to avoid the double blows which it struck at them with either paw. Jud took immediate advantage of his respite and sprang like an acrobat from where he lay and darted behind the nearest log. With a snarl, the bear backed into the angle and turned and faced the worrying dogs which followed so closely. In a flash the dogs ranged themselves behind him on either flank. As the farthest dog sunk his teeth again into the bear's hind leg, the harassed animal turned and struck at the dog's head, which showed underneath one of the logs inside the pen. As the bear moved, the dog dodged back under the shelter of a log. Jud's eyes bulged out as he saw that two





The two dogs dodged back just in time to avoid the double blows







of the toes of the bear's left hind paw were missing.

"Old Three-toes, the Man-Killer!" he exclaimed, "and me with nothin' but a penknife!"

At that moment the dog nearest Jud presented the bear with an enthusiastic bite. Again the bear turned, and, leaning over the log, struck downward so quickly that the dog had scarcely time to move out of range. Jud, farther down the log, crouched, expecting that the enraged animal would climb over and attack him again. As he waited, he managed to open the alleged penknife, which had a blade nearly five inches long. The farther dog then seized his opportunity and ripped his teeth through the bear's exposed flank until the latter turned with a roar and started to scramble over the log and attack in the open. This was too much for Jud. It was not for him to allow either of those dogs, to which he owed his life, to be sacrificed. Resting his left hand on the log, he leaned forward and with all his might drove the knife in behind the bear's left fore shoulder. The blade slipped



in clear to the handle, and, drawing it out, Jud leaped back.

As he felt the stab, the bear whirled around, striking a blow which ripped a great mass of bark and decayed wood from the place on the log where Jud had been lying the second before. Then for a moment bear, dogs, and man stopped and looked one another over in this three-cornered duel. As his breath came back, Jud shouted for help again and again, but no answer came. The clattering rush of the mountain stream near the rest of the party drowned all sounds farther than fifty yards away, nor had Jud been gone long enough to make them uneasy about his absence. There was no doubt in Jud's mind but that he could escape. There was no doubt too that, if he went, the bear would eventually kill both of the dogs before he could return, for the life of a pack which attacks a grizzly away from the hunter is short indeed.

"I just can't do it!" said Jud, to himself. "Them dogs saved my life. I've never quit a friend and I'm not goin' to begin now."

Once more Jud stabbed the bear as it started



over the log after the farther dog. Once more it whirled upon him, only to be grabbed by first one dog and then the other. Then began a grim battle. The man stopped his useless shouting; the dogs yelped no more; nor did the bear make another sound. It was such a fight as our far-away ancestors of the Stone Age must often have waged against the beast-folk in the days when the world was young. Human strength and skill were pitted against brute bulk and strength. The controlled fierceness of the human confronted the ferocious blood-lust of the beast. In dog, in bear, and man alike blazed a courage which nothing but death would quench. Never did Viking, warrior, or champion among Jud's far-away forefathers for ten thousand years clench his teeth more grimly or grip his weapon more bravely for one last long fight than did the old man that day. Time and time and time again he thrust with all his strength. Again and again the maddened beast whirled and started across the log towards him, only to turn back each time to rid itself of the unendurable agony of the dogs'



fanged jaws. Back and forth, around and around in a hurrying, gasping, panting circle the fight went on.

At first the advantage was all with the bear. It seemed to have unlimited endurance, and once, as the near dog was a little slow in getting away, the very tip of the fierce claws caught him back of the shoulder and ripped long, bloody furrows from neck to tail. An inch nearer, and the life days of that dog would have been done. Streaming with blood and yelping with pain, yet he fought quite as fiercely as before. At last old Three-toes changed his tactics. Feinting as if to strike at the farther dog, he suddenly swung back as Jud leaned forward for his thrust and sent a blow whizzing at him which ripped clear through the flesh of his right hand, dashing the knife out of his grasp. Jud staggered back weaponless.

Fortunately, the flying knife struck a bush back of him and dropped near enough to be easily recovered. Jud came back into the fight just in time to save the life of the farther dog. The bear was nearly over the log when,



scrambling up, Jud sank another thrust into the black fur, this time with his left hand, with all his strength. It was enough to bring the bear back again into the pen, and the battle went on, apparently a losing one for the man and his allies. Little by little, however, the bear began to show the effects of the constant attack. A full-grown grizzly can endure wounds which would disable nearly any other animal on this continent, but even its vast strength ebbs with its blood. A crimson froth flew from the wide open mouth, and the great bulk rocked, while, by degrees, the bear's blows were more delayed and slower when they came. The change had come only just in time. The muscles of the dog nearest Jud were stiffening under his wounds. The old trapper himself felt a curious numbness stealing over him, and each time he drove his tired body to the attack with more difficulty.

"I 've got just about one more punch left," he muttered to himself.

In another moment his time came. Rocking backward and forward, the bear for the



first time paid no attention to the attack of the farthest dog, which, alone of the four, was uninjured. It was not until the tearing jaws met in the flesh of its side that the great beast was roused to a last desperate effort. Whirling back, it floundered clear over the log and, with its head on the other side, struck far out. Pulling himself stiffly up until he lay across his log, the old trapper leaned out. With all his might, he drove the knife back of the angle of the bear's fore shoulder. Putting his crippled hand above his sound one, he forced the knife in with the last bit of strength he had left until it went out of sight—blade, handle, and all. With a last effort, he pushed himself back and away from the quivering body and dropped from very weakness down back of the log nearest to him. He was not a second too soon. As if this last terrible thrust had released a spring, the great beast sprang clear off the ground and fell across the log under which Jud lay, his fierce claws dangling not a foot above the body of the old man. With glazing eyes he tried to strike a



last fatal blow, but even as he raised his paw he fell back—dead!

Then everything went black in front of Jud's eyes. He was roused by the dogs licking his hands. With a tremendous effort, he got to his feet and, followed by the dogs, staggered stiffly back to the camp. The boys were just about sitting down to a steaming meal when they saw the old man come tottering toward them. Grasping their rifles, the whole party sprang toward him.

"What's happened, Jud?" shouted Will. "Are you hurt?"

Jud grinned weakly as he leaned back against their supporting arms.

"I've just been killin' old Three-toes with my jack-knife," he announced, as he sank down by the fire.

"Poor chap!" said Fred; "he's out of his head. Something's bitten him up pretty bad."

Old Negouac hurried to bandage both Jud's wounds and those of the dog with hot water and the antiseptic sphagnum moss, after



the Indian fashion. When the boys found that very little of the blood with which Jud was covered was his own, they left him in Negouac's care and, with the other Indians, followed the blood-stained trail along which he had come. There they found the terror of the island for a generation lying dead across the log. They counted seventeen knife-thrusts back and around the vast fore shoulders. In the bottom of the last gaping wound was Jud's jack-knife. The blade had pierced the upper part of the bear's heart, cutting the great central blood-vessels. With enormous effort, they dragged the immense carcass back to the fire. When Negouac saw the black body and the missing toes he said something in his native language to the other two. Immediately they stood up and bowed themselves before Jud with the same gesture which Will had seen Negouac use when he came before the great Shuman himself. Then under Negouac's directions the two hunters climbed a tall pine standing beside the stream. One by one they lopped the branches to the very top.



"What in time are those fellows doing?" inquired Jud between bites.

"They make you lop-stick," returned Negouac, respectfully. "Only great chiefs have lop-stick."

To this day beside that lonely stream towers the great pine with a tuft of branches at its top, the lop-stick of Jud Adams, the Slayer of old Three-toes, the Man-Killer.

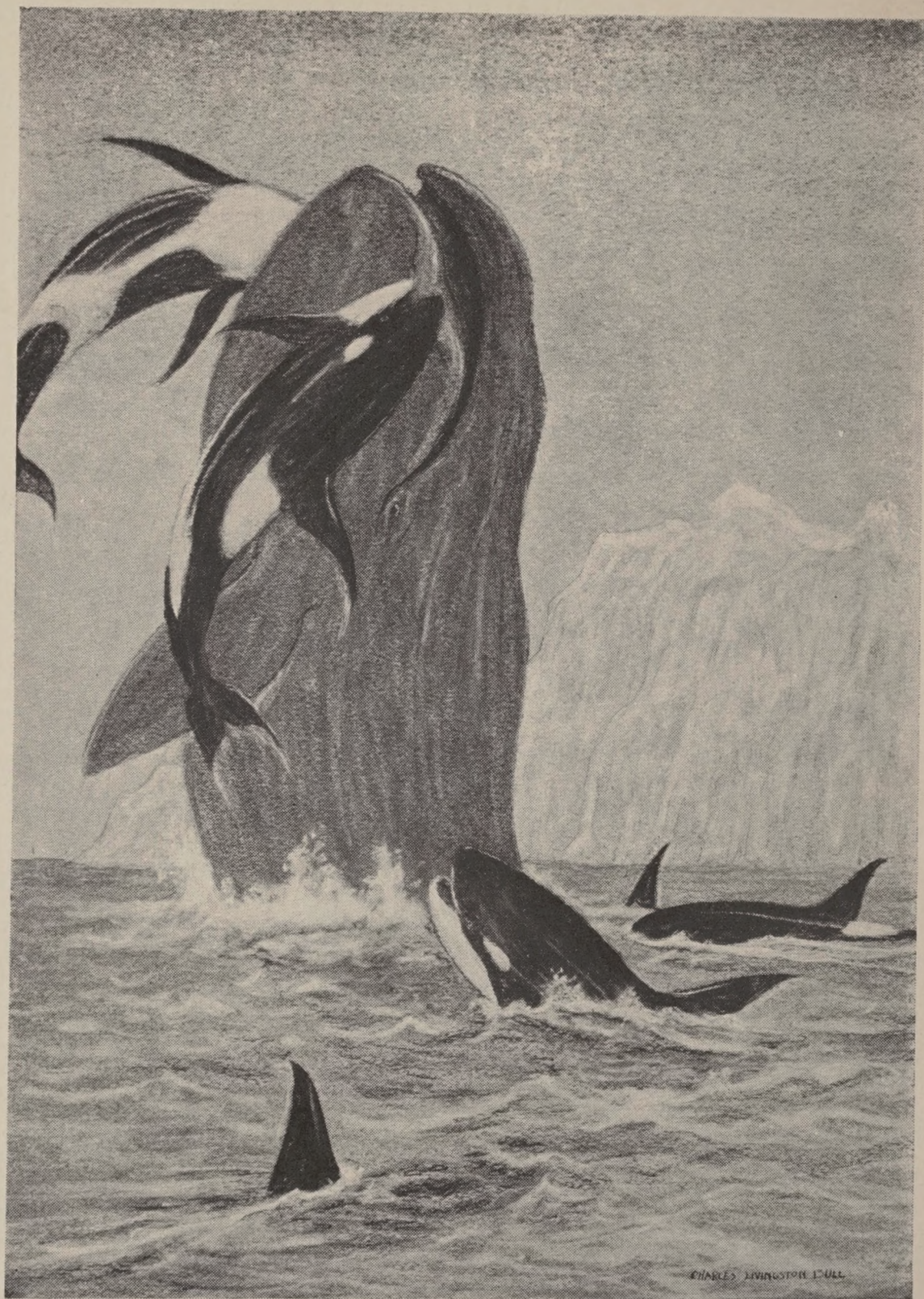


## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LION OF THE NORTH

**F**OR some days after Jud's adventure the Argonauts lay by and rested. Even the iron endurance of the old trapper felt the effects of his fight and for three full days he did little but stay in the teepee and tell wonderful stories in English and Chippewa to the many who crowded around to hear the words of wisdom that fell from the mouth of the slayer of old Three-toes. Then one evening when he felt entirely himself again the Argonauts decided to pay Haidahn a visit. As the long twilight deepened they all climbed up through a little grove on one of the slopes where the chief's lodge stood somewhat apart from the others. The trail wound here and there through the underbrush and up among the trees. Fred had started with them but had gone back to the guest-lodge after a spare knife





The whale stood upright in the water







which he had intended to give to the chief. As he knew the trail well the others went on without him. About the middle of the slope where the path led through thick underbrush there was almost utter darkness. At one place it made a sharp bend. When Will, who was leading, reached this point he suddenly gave a spring backwards and clutched Jud's arm. Right in front of them on the ground a whole log seemed to be ablaze and aflame with a luminous, gold fire which wavered and moved and seemed so real that the boys almost expected to hear the crackling of the flames. Yet there was no sound nor any feeling of heat. In a strange ghostly pallor the fire wavered up and down the side of the rotting log while the end of it was seemingly a mass of flaming, lambent coals.

"Fox-fire!" cried Jud, "the best I ever see too!" he went on.

At first Will could scarcely believe that the old man was right. He had seen patches of fox-fire before, that strange phosphorescence which sometimes shows in decayed wood, but never anything like this. It was like the



Burning Bush which flamed with fire but was not consumed. Only by an effort of his will could he bring himself to touch the mass of cold flames without snatching his fingers back to avoid being burned. Yet he felt only the cool dankness of rotting wood although every fibre of the log was lighted up by this strange ghost-fire. It was Jud who thoughtfully prepared a surprise for Fred. Swiftly knocking off the end of the log, which seemed a mass of flames, he thrust this into a crotch of a near-by tree so that it stood about six feet from the ground and directly faced the trail around the bend. Taking a handful of moist earth he made the end of the log into what looked like a human face. The eyes were two patches of the earth surrounded by flames and he made a black nose and a black gaping mouth filled with flaming teeth. When it was finished it looked like the face of a fiend afire with lambent flames gaping and threatening from the treetop all who might come that way. It was no more than finished when they heard Fred's whistle and had just time to hide in the underbrush when he reached the bend.



As Fred hurried along the winding path he turned the curve and stepped out of the darkness of the thicket and almost ran his face into a threatening, fiery, fearful mask that glared down at him with dead, black eyes from a flaring face. The sight was too much for his nerves. With a yell he turned and sprinted back along the trail at full speed. There was silence for a moment among the three.

"That boy looks to me like a quitter," at last remarked Jud. "He ought n't to run like a rabbit from a jack-o'-lantern."

Will started to answer when his quick ear caught the sound of returning footsteps.

"Wait a minute, Jud," he whispered. "Fred's no quitter."

The three lay quiet without a sound. The steps came nearer and nearer and suddenly into the circle of the uncanny firelight strode the boy. The cold sweat of fear stood in drops on his forehead. His eyes glared aghast at the flaming face but his teeth were clenched and he carried a big club which he had caught up on his way back. Panting



with fright by sheer will-power he forced himself on until he was within striking distance of the apparition. Heaving up his club with a gasp he brought it crashing down and the face disappeared in a cloud of flaming fragments. As Fred stood bewildered his three comrades stepped out from the underbrush. For a moment he looked at them and then for the second time that night turned and started off along the back trail with something very like a sob in his throat as he realized how he had been tricked and shamed by his best friends.

The three looked at each other without speaking. The joke had suddenly become serious as jokes have a dangerous habit of doing. Then Jud ran after the disappearing boy.

"Fred, Fred," he called, "don't go off like this. It was only a fool joke of mine to square myself for those yellowjackets."

Fred stopped as the others came running up.

"That's all right, Jud," he gulped, "I'm not sore at you a bit. I'm only sorry that I scare so easy."



"Forget it," counselled Jud, while Will and Joe patted him reassuringly on the back. "Anyone can be brave when he ain't scared," went on the old man. "It's the fellow who'll come back after he's run away who's really brave—an' that's what you did."

In spite of all these well-meant words Fred decided to go back to the guest-lodge.

"Someway I kind of don't feel like visiting to-night," he told them.

The next day Fred wandered off by himself. Right after breakfast the rest of the party had started off to the fishing-grounds to fish with the great wooden hooks and kelp lines of the Indians for huge, flat halibut.

"I'm liable to get sea-sick in those jumpy bidarkas," was the reason Fred gave to Will for not going. But there was another reason. He wanted to get off by himself and think things out. Noon found him far inland on a treeless table-land from which he could see the sullen, smoky, emerald-green of the sea far below. In front of him, as he walked, rippled silver-white waves of the plumed grass, with silky, white, feathery tassels,



broken here and there by russet-green patches of wild raspberry. Although it was mid-summer there were patches of snow and ice on the slopes and in the gullies while a foot below the surface the ground was still frozen. Beyond the plumed grass were other grasses of such a brilliant green that the shadows across them showed blue in contrast with the varying russets, reds, lemon-yellows and grays of the lichen-covered rocks. Beyond Fred found patches of berries. Will, the botanist of the party, had told him that there were no poisonous berries in the far Northwest. Accordingly Fred sampled all that he met. Besides the raspberries and huckleberries he found a kind like a black currant and another one, the baked-apple berry, which looked like a decayed raspberry but had a most delicious flavor and fragrance. Beyond the plateau from the side of one of the encircling peaks hung a river of shining ice, one of the many glaciers which crept down the mountains to the bay below. From where it touched the table-land a mad stream rushed down to meet him, frothing and raging as it ran. At the edge of the ice were



fields of flowers such as Fred had never imagined. Some of them were strange to him. Others he had learned while botanizing in the East. The brilliant coloring of most of them was in vivid contrast with the stunted, withered growth of the rest of the wind-swept plain. There were masses of crimson and gold where red and yellow poppies grew and sheets of wild forget-me-not the color of the summer sky. Wild phlox made patches of wine-red and pure white and clumps of gentian formed pools of dark, vivid blue. Here and there devil's paint-brush stained the ground an orange-tawny and tangles of the wild sweet-pea trailed everywhere their fragrant blossoms tinted with every pastel shade of pink and blue, while nearer the stream, the soft, green grass was scarlet with the strange blood-dipped leaves of the painted-cup and purple, white and gold with iris. For long and long Fred drank deep of the sheer loveliness spread out before him. Under his careless, happy-go-lucky ways the boy hid a great love for color and beauty as well as a sensitiveness which few of his friends suspected him of



having. No one to watch Fred teasing Jud and joshing with Will and Joe, would have ever realized that he had left them all to-day because he felt hurt and shamed. Within a short time was due the trip to that mysterious island of enchantments and delights which no one might visit who had not proved his courage by some special deed of daring. Will and Jud had already won their way into the Order of the Bear Claw and Fred had no doubt that Joe would prove his courage at the first opportunity that offered. Fred thought bitterly to himself of his own performances. Only last night he had run from a jack-o'-lantern. He had been pitched head-foremost into the air before a lot of grinning Indians by a sea-lion and had been scared by a harmless hair-seal even before they had landed on Akotan.

Lately he had noticed that Negouac and all the other Indians, especially those who wore a bear-claw, seemed to treat him with a certain indifference.

"I guess they all think I'm a quitter," he remarked to himself bitterly as he climbed



along through the ice and rocks, following one of the sides of the glacier. As he ascended he suddenly saw far ahead of him a fox. It was smaller, chunkier and more heavily furred than the red and gray foxes which he had known back in the East and its color was a strange smoky blue. Fred recognized it from Jud's description as the blue or Pribilof fox, a color variety of the Arctic white fox just as the black or silver fox may be a color variation from the ordinary red fox. Fred crouched behind an ice-covered boulder and watched the little animal which came trotting towards him along the edge of a cliff. Around it circled a cloud of screaming birds, for the most part cormorants, and gulls which acted as if the fox had been doing a little egg-collecting. It was evident however from the intent way with which it watched them as they screamed and circled closer and closer that it was still hungry. As Fred saw the fox eye the screaming birds and follow their circles with his head, his mind turned back to what he had been thinking about.

"I've got just about as much chance to go



to Goreloi," he said aloud, "as that fox has to catch one of those birds."

Then something happened which Fred regarded then and since as an omen. The fox backed farther and farther away from the cliff as it continued to watch the circling birds intently. Suddenly it seemed to lose all interest in them. Curling up in the bright sunshine it apparently fell asleep, a fluffy mass of wind-blown fur. The inquisitive birds began to circle closer and closer. All at once the soft thick brush of the fox was thrust up, gently moved back and forth, and then dropped back into the huddle of fur. Again and again this was repeated and each time the circling birds dropped nearer and nearer, screaming with curiosity as to what that waving, fluffy plume might be. At last a herring gull approached within the danger-limit. The fox shot up five feet into the air and its narrow jaws closed on the gull's neck with a death-grip. Swinging its quivering victim over its shoulder with a quick flirt of its head, the fox trotted off behind the rocks to enjoy his meal.



"He *did* catch a bird," exclaimed Fred awedly. "Perhaps that means that I 'll get to the Island after all."

Down from the heights, back from the crystal glacier and away from the jewelled flower-fields he hurried. Some way the stillness and the beauty and the sight of the wild-folk had soothed and comforted him. He found as so many other people have, that if one is worried or tempted or burdened, the hills are full of help for those who will but climb them.

Just as the halibut fleet returned he reached the village. The bidarkas were coming back in pairs. The bow paddlers of each bidarka had crossed paddles so that the craft made a kind of catamaran. Between the two they towed the vast, struggling halibut.

"Ook! Ook! Ook!" grunted Will, as he came within hailing distance.

"Ook! Ook! Ook!" grunted Joe a moment later with both hands pointing straight downwards from his chin.

"What's the matter with them?" inquired Fred of Jud who came in next with three Indians and another halibut.



"They 're tryin' to tell you Injun fashion," explained Jud, "that we 've sighted a herd of walrus. Big hunt to-morrow."

Before daybreak the next morning the little fleet of the walrus-hunters set forth in the thick fog that so often covered that coast. This morning they all went together in one of their long dug-outs fashioned from a single cedar log with fire and little adze-like hatchets and which had taken a full year in the making. In spite of their rude tools the boat was beautifully made on long waving serpentine lines. To-day it was manned with eight paddlers. Old Negouac sat in the stern steering with probably the largest paddle in captivity. Through the fog they glided noiselessly along the coast. Suddenly as they rounded a long point they felt the icy breath of the glacier while through the mist sounded a strange unearthly noise half-way between the hoarse bel- lowing of a herd of bulls and the grunting of enormous pigs. It was the walrus-herd which had come down from beyond the Arctic Circle. As they came nearer and nearer to the sound, like the rising of a great drop-cur-



tain the mist rolled back leaving the shore clear while the bidarkas were still shrouded in the fog. Through the thinning wisps and wreaths of curling fog showed a scene that the boys never forgot. In the foreground in a great glare of vivid yellow from the low-lying sun a vast glacier stretched down from a gap in the encircling mountains. On one side of the glacier were a series of flat basalt rocks over which the surf boomed and broke. There were grouped a herd of animals so gigantic that they seemed as if they must be monsters from some other age. Their bodies were vast shapeless masses of flesh that might weigh from a ton up to three thousand pounds and were covered with naked, wrinkled, warty hides of a yellowish-brown color. Some of the largest were a full thirteen feet in length and fourteen feet in girth. It was the faces of the great brutes which seemed most alarming and uncanny to the boys as they watched. Set deep in the wrinkled skin were small bulging, flecked eyes of light brown which rolled back and forth and around and around in every direction. Long gray bristles set



thick on the upper lip made them seem like grim moustached ogres, while the gleaming two-foot ivory tusks gave a peculiarly menacing appearance to their huge uncanny faces. In a long line they lay upon the basalt rocks. At one end was an old bull, a monster whose size exceeded anything that Jud had ever seen before. Even old Negouac gave an exclamation of surprise when he saw the vastness of his girth. In a long line the monsters lay upon their basalt tables like vast slugs. Suddenly a walrus at the end of the line reared up, grunted once or twice and looked around in every direction. Then jabbing his nearest neighbor sharply with his tusks he lay down again to sleep. The prodded walrus next door roused up, grunted indignantly, looked all around with rolling eyes and sniffing nostrils and then passed the jab which he had received on to the next one, who went through the same performance in his turn. This primitive system of telegraphy went on unceasingly throughout the herd so that always there was one walrus who had been prodded into watchfulness and



was on the alert for any danger. When the end of the line was reached the message was telegraphed back again by the tusks of the end walrus.

Opposite the vast old bull floated just beneath the surface of the water a walrus-cow. Out in the dim water she rocked to and fro in the swirling currents, bolt upright like a spar-buoy. Although on shore she looked like a huge moth-eaten hair-trunk, or a bloated shapeless bag of oil, yet in the water the unwieldy bulk took on lines of grace and motion never seen on land. As the fore-flippers, set flat at almost right angles to the body, swayed in the luminous gray-green water there was a suggestion of strength and even of speed in their motion. The muscles of the short, stumpy fore-arm were like thick, wire cables and were capable of hoisting a dead weight of two thousand pounds up on to an ice-floe or a rock-table. The hind-flippers had no legs but streamed out like a flat, notched tail far beyond the real tail of the walrus which was only about three inches long. The head seemed tiny compared



to the huge, gnarled body and the skull was so faced and reinforced with flat, solid masses of bone to bear the brunt of the pick-axe blows from the tusks, that it seemed as if there were no room for any brain at all. Yet along its own lines the walrus is one of the wariest and wisest of animals and the man or beast who judges its ability by its appearance is apt to be deceived. As this walrus-cow floated with her nostrils just out of water her dulled, bleared, popping eyes were shut. An occasional, automatic stroke from her fore-flippers kept her from drifting into the surf and she lay in the changing tides apparently asleep. Beside her vast bulk swam her calf. It was only about four feet long and had a close short brown coat of hair that contrasted with the naked skin of its giant mother. Its two canine teeth, which would not grow into tusks until after he had grown to the size of his parents, now showed only about two inches long. Sometimes it went off on long perilous expeditions fully six feet away from its guardian but it never stayed away more than a few seconds. Always some overpowering terror would drive



it sculling back for dear life with its little fore-flippers until it butted into the vast bulk with its flat little head. Young as it was it had learned that sea and land are full of dangers for the babies of the wild-folk even when they can claim the lion of the North as father. Again it would nuzzle close under the sheltering protecting flippers of the cow and drink its fill of warm rich milk beneath the cold heaving water. Always the little calf watched the water carefully all about him and the least suspicious movement sent him scuttling back to his mother.

Far up on the gleaming white of the glacier a cream-colored spot appeared. It grew larger and larger until when it reached the edge of the water it showed the long loose-jointed, lithe, snake-headed form of the polar-bear, the cruel, silent, swift tiger of the North. Suddenly it seemed to disappear. It had dropped to the white surface of the glacier and was crawling stealthily to the water's edge with only its black muzzle, black lips and the black rings of its eyes showing against the white surface. Like a shadow it stole along



and slipped into the icy water with all of a shadow's stillness. Diving deep the great bear swam diagonally toward the water beyond the surf-swept walrus rocks where the walrus-mother rocked in the long swells that at the shore broke in thundering surf. Filling his great bellow-like lungs with a supply of air the bear swam swiftly and surely so deep under water that his fur looked like frosted silver. Not until he had passed through the surf and was in the still water beyond did he venture to the surface. Then only the tip of his black muzzle and a momentary gleam of his cruel little eyes appeared. The one look showed him the walrus-mother still sleeping with the calf playing happily around her. As it swam under the water on one of its little tours of exploration the little calf suddenly saw a spectral white shape shoot up towards him through the deep water. Before he could reach his mother or even the surface two sets of deadly, keen claws like curved chisels pierced deep into his woolly hide. So swift and stealthy was the attack that the calf was caught in a deadly grip and found itself speed-



ing away without a chance to cry out or signal its plight to its sleeping dam. Fifty yards away from her the bear rose to the surface for a long breath. The struggling calf came up with him and gave one gurgling, half-strangled bleat almost drowned in the tumult of the near-by surf. It was enough. The walrus has bleared eyes but none of the sea-folk save only the sea-otter has a keener sense of hearing or smell. At the very first syllable of her calf's cry for help the vast bulk of the slumbering cow righted itself and with a gurgling bellow she started under water like a submarine towards the sound. The unwieldy body seemed to yield and shape itself to the pressure of the water and as this one started for the shore its flat five-fingered fore-flippers beat the water under the thrust of the gigantic muscles of the pillar-like fore-legs with tremendous drives while the long hind-flippers which dangled so limp and useless on dry land now whirled and drove through the water like twin screws. The bear had caught the sound of the raging bellow of the walrus even as it dived. Shifting its grip



it clamped its long glittering teeth deep into the furry neck of the calf and swung into the tremendous racing stroke that the polar bear has developed through the water-lanes and across wide stretches of troubled seas in its long hunts and far journeyings among the shifting ice-floes of the North. The white bear is perhaps among the swiftest swimmers of any of the animals which live on land but no land-animal can compete in swimming with the sea-folk. Burdened by the calf it plunged into the surf only a few yards ahead of the rushing bulk whose track in the deep water could be followed by the swirling bubbles and whirlpools which showed on the surface. As the bear emerged from the surf he found himself close to the point where on a black flat rock at the end of the line, the largest bull of the herd lay sleeping until it was his turn to be prodded into sentry duty. Man excepted, there are few things in air, water or on earth which the grim white bear of the frozen North fears. He is a fighter by profession. Against wolf, wolverine, snowy owl and killer-whale, he contends for food and fights for the very



blood of his life. Yet grim outlaw that he was this bear was not willing to try conclusions with a mother-walrus robbed of her calf. No land animal will willingly give a sea-fighter the odds of the water. Already she was so close that he could feel the surge of the water driven ahead of her, beat against his trailing hind-legs, for a polar bear like a crawl-swimmer uses mostly its fore-paws in swimming. Right in front of him towered the sleeping bull. The bear hesitated not a second. In spite of his tusks and bulk the bear preferred the chances on land with the bull to those in the water with the cow. Ordinarily he would have had a good chance to pass the vast sentinel bulk even dragging the dead calf which he clung to with all the tenacity of his fighting breed. Unfortunately for the bear by one of the grim ironies which fate inflicts upon the wild-folk as well as upon us humans this particular patriarch happened to be the mate of the mother-walrus. As she came up from the surf she saw the gaunt ghostly form of her foe with her dear-loved calf in his jaws escaping from her pursuit to



the safety of the rock and bellowed hoarsely her rage and agony at the sight. At the sound the vast bulk which blocked the way of the bear changed from a slug of shapeless flesh to the most terrible of all the land-animals of the northern world—an enraged bull-walrus. When all is said and done the walrus is the overlord of the Northland if once he asserts his kingship. Once aroused he is as irresistible as an avalanche. The lean, swift bear knew all this but he had no choice. Hard at his heels snorted the cow yearning to come to grips with him in the surf. Any choice was better than a duel to the death in the water with her. As his long claws clamped on the slippery rock-table he shook the salt water from his creamy white fur and stood for a moment with the calf in his jaws and then whirled the three-hundred pounds of bone and blubber carelessly over one mighty shoulder as a cat might carry a rat. As he stood there, lithe and alert, one steel-shod paw advanced, he seemed the embodiment of the fierce, unflinching, silent North. The sound of his mate's distress-call aroused the bull to fury in



an instant. Under his code he must fight to the death for mate or calf. He towered up on his fore-flippers six feet high while his gray whiskered face, wrinkled with rage, and glaring eyes made him look like one of the horrible trolls of northland legend. When he saw his calf dripping from the black-rimmed jaws of the bear he gave the fearful, snorting bellow which from a walrus-bull means killing. Undaunted the great bear shifted his weight to his right paw, for the polar bear is left-handed, and with all his fierce strength struck directly up at his opponent. The five curved chiseling talons struck the awful face towering over him just above one of the walrus's eyes, and cut through the thick hide like paper, destroying the eye and ripping off the whole side of the face clear down to the tusk. Dropping the calf between his fore-paws the bear pivoted like a boxer and delivered another full swing with his other steel-shod paw which struck the side of the vast wrinkled neck, ripping out a mass of hide and blubber. There are few animals in the world which can stand up against the crashing full-sweep



of a bear's paw. It would have broken the neck of a musk-ox or wolf, but the three thousand pounds of braced blubber, bone and muscle never even rocked under the impact of the two mighty blows. As the hot blood streamed down from the awful track of the bear's claws, the old bull roared with an unearthly noise that seemed to come from underground, but there was never a sound from the bear. He fought as silently as some fell white ghost. Before the bear could disentangle his claws from the tough hide which they had pierced so deeply and recover his balance, the vast head tipped back until the gleaming two-foot tusks were just above the tense white body. There was an effortless bob of the grim head. In comparison with the sweeping, crashing strokes of the bear the attack of the bull seemed almost puerile, a casual dig with his tusks. Yet the fight was over. The bull had leaned forward as he struck so that the blow had meant that the stroke of the tusks was backed by a ton of blubber, brawn and bone. As the short tusks were withdrawn in place of the vibrant, fierce figure of a second before





Frozen in a solid block of clear ice, towered a monster such as  
had not walked this earth for ten times ten thousand years







there was only a shapeless mass of white fur dabbled with blood. Snorting with rage the bull again and again pounded trip-hammer blows on the battered body of the bear until it was only a pulp of bloody fur and mashed flesh and bone. The mother-walrus reached the beach just as the last blow was delivered and without a glance at the shattered body of the bear with one quick motion drew to herself the motionless shape of her calf. She rubbed her huge head caressingly against the furry little body, making a kind of continual low mooing sound. Then as the calf did not answer she dragged her great bulk up on the rock and tried again and again in vain to persuade it to nurse. Beside her the great bull filled with the madness of battle prodded his neighbor and roared with rage. As the nearest walrus to him caught the smell and sight of the blood of both walrus and bear he too bellowed with fury. In a few moments the whole line was roaring and raging, a mass of fierce, weaving heads, wild, rolling eyes and thrusting tusks. Other walruses, as if aware of the tumult by some sixth sense, began to pop



up from the bottom of the sea like horrible mermen, their mouths still full of the clams on which they had been feeding. Heedless of them all the cow held her dead calf close to her. Just then the mist rolled farther back and showed the maddened heads the bidarka just beyond the breakers. The sight infuriated the wounded bull. With a gurgling roar he shot off the rock into the water, followed by the whole herd. They swam concealed like submarines. Suddenly all around the canoe a ring of grim heads showed, throwing up the water like a herd of geysers as they came to the surface. Then snorting with rage the whole herd charged down upon the boat. For the first time the boys saw the Indians excited. None knew better than they what it meant for a walrus-herd to run amuck. They pounded on the gunwales of the boat and shrieked and yelled like madmen to scare them off.

"Shoot! shoot!" bellowed old Negouac to the boys from the stern, waving his steering paddle. At the word the four repeating rifles went off in volleys that sounded like the rattle



of machine-guns, but the dug-out was curvetting and bucking and prancing in the choppy waves so that many of the shots went wild. Some of the expanding bullets however reached their mark and the ring of hideous heads that approached the boat showed gaps here and there. Still they came nearer and just as the last shot in their magazines was fired the great bull burst up from the depths right beside Jud, throwing the water over him in sheets, and hooked his stout gleaming tusks in the edge of the gunwale.

"Shoot! Shoot!" shrieked Negouac like a syren whistle from the bow.

"Awick ook—big devil-walrus," groaned Akotan, whacking him over the nose with his paddle. The bull only snorted and pushed his tusks forward on the gunwale. Two inches further and they would hook over the edge of the boat and the ton of walrus weight would capsize them all. Crunching through the soft wood the fatal tusks slid slowly and grindingly forwards. There was no time to reload. It was then that Jud and his pipe saved the day. As the wind was off-shore



the old trapper had been smoking some of Big Jim's peculiarly penetrating perique. No walrus can bear smoke. The reek from a camp-fire or the smoke from a passing steamer will drive a walrus herd from its floe and away from shore for days. Bending down until he looked right into the blood-shot, sinister remaining eye of the monster Jud puffed a mouthful of tobacco smoke directly into the gaping nostrils which were set in the top of the head of this ogre of the sea. The effect of that one puff was instantaneous. Closing his eye tight the old bull wrinkled his great muzzle and with a snort of disgust tipped backwards until the tusks tore their way out and with a tremendous lurch the boat went free. For a moment the ring of attackers gave back. Then Tilgalda from his end suddenly began to shout with all the force of his leathern lungs, "Back, back!" As the others bent to their paddles they caught a glimpse of something passing under the boat like a submarine. It was the outraged bull who had returned to the attack with a new plan which had evidently come to him under



water. Instead of trying again to hook his tusks over the boat's side from the surface he passed clear under the craft and turning over on his back ripped his thick tusks through the bottom of the boat. He chanced to start his drive directly under where Negouac was sitting and the force of the blow, backed with all the driving power of the bull's weight, threw him up into the air and out into the gray water towards the ring of tusked heads that were closing around the boat. Without a sound the old man disappeared under the water, for like all of the Eskimos Negouac could not swim. The water rushed into the dug-out through the slashed bottom and the Indians began to bail frantically with their hands while Jud and Will and Joe tore off their shirts to caulk the leaks. Far out beyond where Fred was sitting the old man came to the surface held up for a moment by his buoyant bird-skin parka. His face wizened and shrivelled with the fear of death seemed suddenly unutterably old, while his eyes stared mournfully into Fred's, as if pleading for the last of his life doubly dear because so short.



As Negouac struggled in the water one of the bulls gave his battle-cry and swam slowly towards him. For a moment Fred stared horrified at the sight. Although a good swimmer he was afraid, terribly afraid, to plunge into that icy water. Even if he could hold the old man up it seemed certain that they would both be pierced by the tusks of some of the walrus herd. Suddenly there flashed into the boy's mind the memory of the other times when he had yielded to his fears. He remembered too how one of the greatest of our presidents had once written that the best way for a boy to become brave was to always act as if he were not afraid. Slowly, slowly the old man's face sank. Shivering and half-sobbing the boy threw off his coat, kicked off his heavy sea-boots and sprang into the sea. The water was death-cold and the chill of it ran like ice through Fred's veins until he felt as if a cold hand had clutched at his heart. With a few quick strokes he reached Negouac.

"Keep quiet," he gasped, "or you'll drown us both." The old man only grunted but never moved a muscle as Fred turned



him over on his back and, holding up his head with both his hands, began to swim on his own back slowly and heavily towards the boat. As he swam Fred could watch the approach of the walrus. It had been slow at first but when the great beast saw that the swimmers were retreating he started towards them at full speed with a series of terrifying "looks." Fred swam with all his strength and the boat was not far away, but he never would have made it except for Jud. Nearer and nearer came the glaring eyes of the walrus and in spite of his most desperate efforts Fred seemed hardly able to move. At last he could feel the thrill of the water driven before his pursuer and hear his snorting breath close at hand. When the gargoyle head was almost at his feet the boy started to turn over and dive desperately with Negouac in his arms in the hope that he might avoid the first rush of the monster. Suddenly from what seemed a long, long distance away he heard Jud's voice say, "Keep agoin', boy. I'll tend to the bull." Seeing Fred's danger the old trapper had managed just in time to slip



a cartridge into his unloaded rifle. It was necessary to drive a bullet through the eye of the walrus into his brain. No other shot would stop his rush in time. The old man waited as long as he dared and steadied his rifle until the gleaming ivory tip of the farther sight stood full against the mottled brown of one of the walrus' glaring eyes. Just as the beast's muzzle grazed Fred's foot Jud squeezed the trigger. There was a crack, a spurt of fire and a soft-nosed bullet passed upwards through the eye and expanding tore its way through the very centre of the great beast's brain. Like a ton of lead the walrus sank while the rush of its great body passed harmlessly under Negouac just as Fred's shoulders touched the boat. Half a dozen strong hands seized him and pulled him and Negouac into the boat. Over their shivering bodies the Indians threw all the coats which were not being used to caulk the leaking boat. There was no time to pay them any further attention. The boat was filling fast and the infuriated herd were closing in on them again. With two men unable to help, guns unloaded



and the whole crew bailing and caulking alternately there seemed but little chance this time to stave off the attack. Then it was that Tilgalda, who was paddling bow, saved the day. As one of the largest of the herd circled his end of the canoe the great Indian stood up to his full height and drove his native bone-tipped harpoon deep into the broad back of the swimmer. At the rankling stab the vast body of the walrus plunged forward like a torpedo boat. The braided seal-skin rope fastened to the harpoon hissed and smoked over the gunwale. It finally brought up with a jerk that pitched the whole crew forward as the end of the line was reached which was knotted around a solid support set deep into the bow of the canoe. Instantly the long boat, heavily loaded as it was, whizzed through the water towards the village and whirled away from out of the very midst of the ominous crowd of threatening heads, nor did the maddened rush of the wounded walrus cease until the boat was right opposite the village. Then as it floated exhausted on the surface Jud killed it with a well-placed shot.



Tilgalda quickly fastened to the carcass a walrus-float made of a whole inflated seal-skin and helped the others paddle in the sinking boat. As they landed, old Negouac, shivering with cold and weakness, removed from his neck the vast curved claw which hung there and without a word in front of the tribe who had come down to meet them tied it around Fred's neck.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE SEA WOLF

**J**UST at dawn one morning the skin flap of the guest-lodge was raised. Saanak stood framed in the opening. With his red-gold beard, blue eyes and towering height he seemed like Eric the Red come back to earth again. For a moment he stood looking at the boys who stared up at him sleepily.

"To-day I hunt the whale," he said. "Who goes with me?"

For a moment no one answered. There was something mysterious about his face and deep-set brooding eyes. Even old Tilgalda with his twisted neck and head set awry was less uncanny than this blue-eyed Eskimo who spoke so seldom and so strangely. As Fred once said, he always seemed to be seeing something which was n't there. The rest of the tribe felt the same way towards him. Even Negouac



and Haidahn, chiefs as they were, treated Saanak, who held no rank whatever, with a respect which they showed few others.

It was Joe who broke the silence.

"I go," he said briefly, scrambling out of his blanket.

"Eat well," said Saanak shortly. "Meet me by the shore," and he strode off, passing old Negouac as he went.

"What wanted the Whale-Killer?" inquired the old man a few moments later.

"He hunts the whale to-day," responded Joe. "I go with him."

Since they had known him the boys had never seen Negouac so upset.

"It cannot be," he said decisively. "None of the blood of the Great Chief may hunt with Saanak."

Joe looked at him obstinately.

"I go," was all he said.

Negouac gave a helpless gesture and hurried away. Before the Argonauts had finished breakfast he was back again with Haidahn himself. The elder chief wasted no time.

"It is not for you to go, Ilyamna," he be-



gan at once in his curious English. "There be no whale-hunters left in the tribe but Saanak—all the others have been killed. Only his magic has saved him."

"I go," was all that Joe would say.

Haidahn tried again.

"It is not necessary for thee to wear the Bear-Claw to go to Goreloi," he said. "He who has once gone to Goreloi may always go. Stay with us," went on the chief, speaking so pleadingly that Negouac stared at him in astonishment. "What know you of hunting the whale?"

"Do you mean to say, Chief," broke in Jud, who had listened open-mouthed to the conversation, "that old man Saanak goes out alone and kills real whales?"

Haidahn nodded.

"It can't be done," said Jud decisively. "I served a year on a whaler when I was a lad. He might go out in one of them skin-canoes an' kill a blackfish with a bone-harpoon. They ain't only about twenty feet long an' don't put up much of a fight, but he could no more kill an old humpback or a bowhead or a



hundred-foot sulphur bottom than he could kill an elephant with a pop-gun. As for a cachalot I've seen one bite a whale-boat in two an' kill a whole crew with one smack of its tail. What could a single Injun in a skin-canoe with a bone toothpick do against any of them?"

"Yet," persisted Haidahn, "Saanak hunts all whales—except one. Sometimes he is carried far out to sea. Always he comes back. Always he makes his kill."

"What's the whale which he doesn't hunt?" inquired Will curiously.

"No man has ever slain the sea-wolf," was Haidahn's only reply.

"That's the killer-whale," exclaimed Jud. "He's the swiftest, fiercest brute that swims. I've seen a pack of 'em kill a seventy-five-foot right whale an' swim down a fin-back. Onct I saw a single killer chew up a big baskin' shark twice his size—an' a baskin' shark's some bad actor himself. There ain't nothin' in the sea that a killer's scared of," finished the old trapper.

"Nor on land," chimed in Negouac unex-



pectedly. "When hunting is bad in the water, killers swim up to the edge of the floe and change into great wolves and gallop across the ice. My three brothers hunt a gray wolf all day long once. When he tired out he jump into water, turn into killer-whale and swim away."

Jud nodded politely.

"I never happened to see that myself," he said, "but I would n't put anything past a killer-whale. I don't think though, Joe," he went on, "that this Saanak is a safe chap to sign up with. He looks like a fellow who's all the time huntin' for trouble—an' generally findin' it."

"I go," said Joe for the fourth time, nor could the rest of the party say anything to make him change his mind.

"You may go," said Jud mournfully at last, "but will you come?—that's the question."

Breakfast over, the whole party went down to the beach where they found Saanak waiting for them, the tattooed whale-marks from nostril to ear gleaming red against his grim face. Drawn up on the sand was his pet, two-man



bidarka made of selected skins, oiled until it glistened and which he only used for his annual whale-hunts. In the bow compartment were his harpoons and lances. Negouac told the Argonauts that in Saanak's tribe whale-hunting was hereditary. The secrets and the weapons of this big game sport of the seas were handed down from father to son in certain families, and when a hunter became famous throughout the tribe for his skill and success after death his body was embalmed and preserved in some lonely cave. Thither before a great hunt each whaler would go alone and lay their weapons in the hand of the dead chief so that some of his virtue might pass into them.

The harpoons had a handle six feet in length of some strange foreign wood which ocean currents had carried up from the South. To the head of this shaft was lashed a polished socket of walrus ivory. In this was fitted a spear-head, of which Saanak had several in the boat. They were some twelve inches long with barbs four or five inches broad and were hammered out of dull, soft iron.

"That made from sky-stone," observed



Saanak as the boys examined them curiously. As they looked Jud told them of the great mass of meteoric iron which had fallen on one of the northernmost capes and from which all the Eskimos obtained their iron for generations until an Arctic explorer brought it back for a museum and robbed thousands of little hunters of their sole supply of iron.

In the stout shaft of this spear-head a round hole had been drilled and through this was fastened a coil of whale-rope beautifully plaited from tiny strips of tough walrus hide in a curious pattern unlike any braid which the boys had ever seen before. Negouac told them that sometimes it took a whole year to braid a hundred-foot whale-rope and that every strand was made of the finest selected strips of carefully cured leather. Once made a whale-rope was handed down as an heirloom from father to son in the whaling families. All three of the harpoon heads which the boys examined had a curious greasy surface showing that they had been plunged deep into whale blubber on many a successful hunt. On the flat side of each head had been carved curious



marks like little sticks set in bunches and lines and angles. Years later Will learned that those were magic runes, good-luck inscriptions which the old Norsemen were accustomed to carve on their weapons in their curious written language. Besides the harpoons Saanak had a couple of whale-lances. One had a keen iron point some three feet long set in a five-foot shaft while the other was shorter and tipped with smooth walrus ivory.

In the stern cockpit where Joe was to sit there was nothing but one of the huge double-bladed paddles which he knew so well how to use.

"Looks as if you 're goin' to be the crew," remarked Jud, "while Mr. Saanak does the huntin'."

Joe said not a word but carefully placed beside him his rifle and a couple of clips of cartridges. Saanak watched his preparations scornfully.

"Gun no good for whales," he observed. "I lend you lance when we make fast."

"Wait a minute," suddenly exclaimed Jud, and he hurried back to the guest-lodge to re-



turn in a moment with a clip of curiously long cartridges unlike any which the boys had ever seen before. "Load up with these," he said, thrusting them into Joe's hands. "They're high-power explosive cartridges an' make a hole half as big as your hat. I wouldn't waste 'em on you boys for ordinary shootin' but I believe that even Fred here could hit a whale at harpoon-range—an' he's probably the worst shot in the whole civilized world. Land one or two of these in Mr. Whale's chest and he'll sit up an' take notice no matter how big he is. Good luck!" and the old man slapped Joe cheerfully on his unresponsive back although very doubtful in his own mind whether he would ever see him again.

Saanak gave them no time for any further good-byes. Motioning Joe into his seat he suddenly pushed the light bidarka away from the steep sloping beach—and the hunt was on.

As they sped over the misty waters great Shishaldin muttered in the distance with its high head shrouded in vapors. Beyond the beach the frowning rock-walls which buttressed the coast were covered with green and



gold sphagnum moss and tapestried with many-colored lichens. On them the big burgo-master gulls bred in thousands and circled overhead in stately flight while comical shovel-billed sea-parrots scurried rapidly and noiselessly around the lower reaches of the cliff. Under the rapid paddle-beats of Saanak and Joe the little craft shot over the choppy waves through the pass and before long was skimming the lazy swells of the great bay without. As usual a portion of it was covered with the fog which is always a part of an Arctic summer. Sometimes the mist would lift and they could see far across the gleaming waters. Again it would settle and the bidarka be lost in a white smother of clammy vapor. An hour went by nor had any game been sighted, although they were approaching the middle of the great bay which usually swarmed with life. Suddenly as they shot out of a tangle of mist-wreaths, the smooth water all around them broke and foamed as a herd of blackfish passed, small dark whales only about fifteen feet long of a dead black color with square bluff heads and side-fins shaped like cutlass-



blades. The mouth of each was so shaped as to give these little whales a smiling, happy expression. As the jolly looking procession rolled past, Joe looked inquiringly at Saanak, knowing that the blackfish was the usual whale to be attacked by Eskimo hunters, but the bow-paddler gave no sign of even noticing them. It was evident that to-day he hunted only big game. Beyond the blackfish school the mist settled down again and a few moments later a gurgling, plaintive whistle sounded from the surface of the water with a strange unearthly tone unlike that of any bird or beast which Joe had ever heard. Then so suddenly that Joe swerved until he nearly tipped over the baidarka, a great white back showed above the surface not six feet away, while at the same instant the uncanny whistle sounded again across the water. As the spectral white shape drifted past, Joe recognized the beluga or white whale, another one of the smaller whales hunted by Indians and Eskimos alike. Its hide furnishes the porpoise skin of commerce and its flesh although palatable is occasionally dangerous, whole tribes having



been known to be poisoned from feasting on it. Still Saanak gave no sign but paddled steadily toward the center of the bay. As the drop-curtain of the mist rose again they found themselves once more near the same school of blackfish that had passed them a few moments before. Suddenly from far out in the bay there was a gleam of blue that showed in the sun like the flash of polished steel. For an instant it shot above the surface of the water and then went under, only to reappear two seconds later a hundred yards nearer. As Saanak saw this blue flash approaching with such lightning-like speed he dropped his paddle, seized one of his lances and motioned to Joe to be on guard. A moment later there flashed into sight that swift lancer of the sea, the sword-fish. This one was a monster of its kind nearly eighteen feet long with a long, keen ivory sword thrust out in front over four feet in length. As this giant herring whizzed through the water its magnificent back fin of blazing blue showed high above the surface and as it approached with the speed of an express-train, its brilliant eyes blazed on either



side of the long sharp sword. For the first time Joe realized how helpless an earth-dweller is when he meets the water-people in their own country. A sword-fish can drive its tusk through a foot of solid oak and it is about as easy to escape its rush as to side-step a cannon-ball. Fortunately for both of the hunters this one paid no attention to the bidarka. In a moment it was among the school of little whale and had buried its keen sword clear to the hilt in the dark side of a twenty-foot blackfish. With an indescribable twist and curve of its lithe body the sword-fish disengaged and plunged his sword into another. The red blood dyed the water all around the bidarka as the great fish leaped back and forth plunging, stabbing, twisting and thrusting until the startled herd sounded and dived and swam down deep to avoid this fatal freelance of the sea. The sword-fish followed them and in a moment the bidarka was alone on those stained waters. As they moved away both of the hunters showed their race. Two white hunters would have talked over for hours every detail of the attack



and their escape. Not a word was spoken by either Joe or the silent Saanak. On and on they fled over the heaving waters. As the day passed the mist burned away and finally the whole expanse of the bay showed clear before them. Suddenly far away across the smoky green water appeared what seemed a fleet of small craft each one showing a black flag hanging low over the water. As they came nearer Joe could count six in all. Back and forth the little fleet quartered, keeping together and coming nearer to the bidarka with each evolution until Joe could make out that the black flag which each of these pirates of the sea flew was none other than the inky black dorsal fin of the orca or killer-whale. As they approached closer each killer seemed to wear a patent-leather hide so smooth and black was their skin. Just back of their gleaming, sinister little eyes, these wolves of the sea showed a pure white blotch like a splash of white-wash, which was repeated again across their sides, just beyond the back fin. The throat and belly of each one were of the same pure white which contrasted sharply with the



sombre black of the rest of the body. From its pointed, torpedo-like head to its sleek, double-fluked tail the orca is built for speed. To-day the well-drilled pack traveled so close to the surface that their fins and the rounded curves of their black backs showed constantly above water. As they swam each killer kept its place and distance so that their regular ranks produced an extraordinary effect of discipline and power. Saanak signalled Joe to stop paddling and the bidarka drifted motionless. With smooth swiftness the black band circled through the water on the look-out for some prey with which to satisfy their insatiable appetites. Once or twice one approached close to the bidarka and seemed to look it over questioningly and then went on, evidently convinced that there was nothing very appetizing about this hollow motionless monster. Joe knew from the stories which he had heard about these giant sea-wolves that once wounded or aroused they would dash upon any moving thing within sight, which was evidently the reason why Saanak had stopped paddling. The further fact that he



made no effort to attack any of that fierce company also convinced Joe that the orca was not included in the list of whales which Saanak hunted for food or glory. As the two watched they saw an instance of killer craft and ferocity which would well make any human hunter hesitate before engaging even the least of that black and white pack. Not far from the biddarka towered a blue-and-green iceberg which had broken off from one of the glaciers and like some majestic crystal castle was sailing slowly down the bay. In the water by its farther end suddenly showed the vast bulk and small head of a cow-walrus, with a little walrus-calf swimming near her. As the mother-walrus up-ended in the water she looked like a huge black spar-buoy. The calf was only about four feet long and had a short brown coat of hair which contrasted with the naked skin of its giant mother. While the cow swayed and dozed in the current which swept by the berg the calf swam around on little exploring expeditions of its own, never going more than a few feet away from the vast bulk of its mother. Unfortunately for the



calf the wicked little eyes of one of the orca band caught sight of its movements. Swerving away from its companions with one sweep of its serrated tail the killer shot through the green water toward the unconscious calf. Aroused by some instinct of danger the latter looked up to see black death rushing towards it like an express train. With a little terrified bleat the baby-walrus sculled rapidly to the side of its sleeping mother and with a desperate effort clambered up on her bluff square shoulders and perched there seemingly out of harm's way. Crafty as fierce the killer swept down upon the two and before the drowsy mother-walrus was fully awake, struck her huge floating body with a bump that sent the calf spinning through the air to land in the water with a splash ten feet away. There was an arrowy twist and curve of the sleek, black body and as the calf tried again to return to its mother, a dreadful mouth filled with a double row of huge pointed teeth opened at its side. There was another bleat of distress and pain as the fatal teeth sank deep into the soft, woolly little body; a worrying motion of the



great jaws, a gulp, and the calf disappeared down the insatiable maw of the sea-wolf, which wheeled and started back to rejoin its band. It was not to escape unscathed. As the grim jaws closed on the calf, the mother-walrus, with a raging bellow, started toward the killer. Her shapeless body seemed suddenly to develop lines and curves of unsuspected speed and before the orca, swift as it was, could rejoin its band, the walrus was upon it. Too late to save her calf's life she was in time to avenge his death. Before the smooth black and white body of the killer-whale could swerve out of her path the walrus had sunk both of her long tusks deep into its back. The orca twisted and bent like a bow under the pain of the stab until at last it fairly tore itself away from the piercing tusks, which left ghastly wounds from which the hot blood poured in jets. The wounded wolf of the sea gnashed and snapped at the shoulders of the cow, but even a killer's iron jaws are powerless against the three-inch armor-plate which protects the neck and shoulders of a walrus. As the keen tusks



again grazed its flank the orca wheeled and dashed through the water to take its place again in the pack. As it reached the orca company still quartering back and forth in ordered ranks, the wounded killer met with an unexpected and appalling reception. At the first scent and sight of the gaping slashes on its back, the whole pack of sea-wolves were transformed. Breaking ranks they leaped like tigers upon their unfortunate companion and with their steel-sharp teeth literally tore it to pieces. The water was churned into a bloody foam by the gnashing jaws of the attackers and the tortured twistings and turns of the wounded orca as it tried in vain to escape. The struggle stopped as suddenly as it began. One moment the water was a welter of froth and blood, of leaping bodies and snapping jaws. The next the killers were back in their ranks and ranging the sea as if nothing had happened. Of the wounded orca there was not a trace. Yet the insatiable appetites of that fierce pack were only whetted by their cannibal feast and they patrolled the waters on the look-out for more



prey while from the edge of the berg the mother-walrus bellowed in vain for the calf that would come back to her no more. A moment later the vast iceberg shook and swayed, while far under water a sound as of some enormous body rubbing against the rough ice could be distinctly heard. Suddenly the sea boiled like a pot and up through the foaming water showed first the huge head and then part of the body of one of the largest of all created mammals, the right whale. It had been rubbing off barnacles and the crustacea called whale-lice against the base of the berg. Enormous plates of bone on either side of its head came together at the front, making a rude prow which gives this whale its other name of bow-head. For a moment Joe gasped. The vast body stretched away through the water a good sixty feet. The huge head, which showed first, was more than twenty feet from the blunt nose to the short fore-flukes where the mighty neck began. Before the whale had sounded it had been feeding by the simple process of swimming with its mouth open where clouds of minute crustacea had stained the



water red and brown. Sifting these through a sieve of swinging baleen or whale-bone, which with a right whale takes the place of teeth, it had compressed the mouthful with its tongue, a two-ton mass of flesh, and swept it down to its three-inch gullet. Thereafter it had spent an hour and a half under water, which is the extreme limit of time during which a right whale may stay away from the surface.

As the double jet of vapor which marks a bow-head, spouted aloft, every sinister black fin of the killer squadron wheeled and sped toward the unreckoning monster. It did not seem possible that this dark pack of the sea could pull down the mammoth whale whose bulk was a hundred times larger than that of any one of its assailants. Yet the contest was not so uneven as it appeared. The bow-head could not escape by diving to unknown depths. For its very life's sake it must stay on the surface for over an hour and breathe deeply of the upper air. This whale was an old bull cased from head to tail in two feet of blubber and its speed was less than half of its lean,



lithe opponents. Unlike the terrible cachalot or sperm-whale it had no teeth. While its ponderous half-moon flukes could dash the life out of any orca on which they might land, the arrowy speed of the killers made them comparatively safe from any such attack. Remained only its vast bulk for a protection—and mere size avails little against speed and skill.

As the killer-pack encircled the doomed whale, Saanak with a quick turn of his paddle shot the bidarka into the lee of the iceberg where it was partially protected by a sunken reef of ice which jutted out under water from the wall of the berg. In a fight for the championship of the sea he was firmly convinced that the contestants were entitled to a free field so far as Joe and himself were concerned. At that moment the great whale seemed to sense the approach of its enemies and its vast bulk shot away from the iceberg a hundred feet or more where it could have free play for its flukes. The attack of the killers was so swift that the two hunters could scarcely see what had happened. All in an instant the sea broke



into a mass of waves and out of a welter and smother of froth and foam the vast bulk of the whale sprang into the air and fell back with a crash that could be heard a mile away. In and out of the spray leaped and darted the smooth black forms of the killers. Around and around the whole group wheeled and whirled while cavernous bellowings sounded as the beset bull fought for air. At regular intervals one after another of the orcas sprang into the air and with a smashing blow of tail and fin came down upon the rounded back of the whale with an impact that shook even its braced and padded bulk. Once as the bull up-ended and stood almost upright in the water, its vast head showed above the foam and the hunters saw the cruel methods of the killers. Two of the largest of the band had clamped and locked their terrible teeth deep into either side of the whale's vast lower jaw and hung there like bull dogs, dragging down with all of their weight and strength in an attempt to force open the great cavern of the mouth. Tipping backwards until it swung its worrying opponents clear of the water, the



great whale tried in vain to break their hold. Finding that their locked grip was not to be broken the old bull threw himself forward with another crash, evidently attempting to fall upon one or both of his tormentors. It was in vain. Swinging their supple bodies to one side the killers easily avoided the crushing smash of the whale's fall. The drop threw its great flukes clear of the water. Swinging them like a scythe the bow-head struck out at random. By a chance blow one of the flukes struck a killer full on its back and sheared through flesh, fin and bone, cutting the black body almost in half. As before the orcas sprang upon their wounded comrade and another cannibal feast followed which only ended when the last fragments of the struggling killer had disappeared down a dozen gaping gullets. While this was going on a fearsome ally of the black band appeared. Up from the depths drifted a sinister shape whose undershot jaw, studded with cruel saw-edged teeth, marked it as a member of the shark family. Its cold, greenish, implacable eyes glowed as it caught sight of the wounded



whale. The upper lobe of the forked tail of this new-comer tapered out in a crescent curve of flexible bone nearly as long as the rest of its twenty-foot body and edged like a scimitar. This whip-like tail identified the monster as a thresher shark which is often found fighting on the side of a killer-band for a share of the booty. As it approached the bow-head, the shark suddenly balanced itself upon its head so close to the surface that its enormous flail-like tail curved clear out of the water. Diving downward it landed a smashing blow on the back of the whale with this curved weapon, which echoed across the bay and cut out a strip of blubber five feet long. The noise seemed to arouse the orcas, for one after another they followed suit. Bending their lithe bodies like salmon leaping a water-fall, they sprang into the air and landed one after another upon the great whale's broad back. The two grim killers hanging to the whale's jaw had kept their grip through feasting and fighting and never ceased to drag downwards with all their weight and strength. Little by little the great whale's strength waned. It



was not built for endurance and the storm of blows and slashes which fell upon it without an instant's cessation little by little sapped its vitality. The bellowing sound of the air forced in and out through its blow-holes changed to gurgling groans as more and more water mixed with the air and the vast jaw drooped open a few inches as the worrying killers at its head increased their efforts. With a last rally the whale stood upright in the water and bringing its jaws together once more shook its great head like a bull trying to dash off a pair of worrying dogs. At this moment another fatal ally of the killer-band appeared. Across the waters lashed into foam shot the same sapphire flash that had approached the blackfish. Towards the whale fighting for its life whizzed like a torpedo the sword-fish. As the great mammal raised its head the fierce sea-rover drove its sharp lance clear to the hilt just below the whale's neck where beats the gigantic heart. It was a fatal blow. Instantly the clouds of white spray from the blow-holes turned a dark red and the stricken whale whirled around and around



with trembling, shaking movements in its death-flurry. Little by little the lower jaw sagged until the great cavern of a mouth screened by swinging whale-bone fell open. Within showed the vast soft tongue. On the instant, fighting and struggling like demons for a place, the killers thronged in and snapped off great masses from the two-ton tongue. This was the prize for which they had fought. Almost instantly it was devoured and in balanced ranks the black fins started away. The shark tore off masses of blubber with its under-shot jaw until it sank almost too gorged to swim. The sword-fish apparently received nothing from the fight save the pleasure of again and again stabbing its sharp sword into the blubber-bound body.

Joe had watched the killers frowningly. A great disgust and hatred for these cruel black devils of the sea had possessed him. Suddenly around the bend of the berg whirled the last of the pack which had lingered behind the others. As its deep-set, evil, little eyes caught sight of the bidarka with a flirt of its supple body it swerved and looked the little craft



over challengingly. It was too much for Joe's pride. Already unconsciously he had resented the brute savagery of these wolves of the sea. Now every human instinct revolted against the arrogance of this one. In a flash his rifle was at his shoulder. There was a shout of warning from Saanak but Joe heeded it not. Aiming carefully at the black fore-shoulder he pulled the trigger. The next instant what seemed an avalanche of fierce flesh rushed down upon the bidarka. Saanak dropped his paddle and seized a harpoon in either hand. As the monster rushed into range he buried first one and then the other deep into the black vibrant back. So far as stopping the rush of the killer they might as well have been knitting needles. With his eyes gleaming like blue fire the Norselander seized a lance, prepared to die fighting. Joe fired two more shots. One bullet struck within the gaping steel-lined jaws and exploded harmlessly. The other landed lower down and burst well within the sheathed bones of the neck. Although blood spouted from the wound it did not slack the rush of the



killer in the least. Another second and it seemed as if the black torpedo-like head would crash through the flimsy side of the bidarka. Just as Saanak stabbed desperately at the open jaws the orca shot up to the surface of the water and hung there struggling. It had grounded on the concealed reef of rough ice which stretched up to within a few inches of that surface and back of which Saanak had placed the bidarka. For an instant the black and white body hung not two yards from the boat, struggling and lashing with all its fierce length in order to win the deeper water beyond. Slowly the grim form slid forward and Saanak plunged his stabbing-lance again and again into the mottled hide, but the killer only redoubled its efforts to reach the bidarka. Little by little the vast body wormed its way across the rough ice until it seemed as if one more plunge would send it into the deeper water beyond where the bidarka lay. Two seconds more would decide. Saanak stabbed once more, driving his lance in with all his weight and strength behind it. There was a sharp crack and with a groan the huge Es-



kimo found himself holding only a broken handle in his hand.

"Stoop down," commanded Joe sharply. Involuntarily the other obeyed. As the killer surged forward there was the crash of a rifle-shot followed instantly by another. Both bullets struck one after the other at the angle where the neck of the killer joined the body and exploded as they met the heavy bones below the black skin. The effect was miraculous, taking into consideration the size of the orca and the diminutive bullets. As they burst they tore away the whole upper ventricles of the heart of the killer. With one last plunge it shot off the reef and its steel jaws snapped together in its death struggle not two feet from the bidarka. As the struggles died away Saanak fastened a float to the great body and drew out his harpoons one after the other. Not until then did he turn to the Indian boy.

"Wear this, thou Killer of the Sea Wolf," was all he said, but against Joe's chest dangled the Bear-Claw.



## CHAPTER X

### MAHMUT

**F**OLLOWED a long resting time. Only the Shuman knew the date of the trip to Goreloi. Day after day went by and still he gave no sign while the Argonauts went fishing on the bay and hunting with Tilgalda and Negouac. At first they tried to make new acquaintances among the tribe but always the Indian boys and young men seemed uneasy and refused to talk much when the visitors were around. At last Will spoke to Negouac about it, for they had seemed far more friendly when the Argonauts first landed than they did now.

"Those who wear the Bear-Claw are men apart," was all that the chief would say.

"I'm getting kind of tired of this 'apart' business," complained Fred a few days later.



"I don't care about fishing and I 'm not much of a shot."

"You 've said it, boy," agreed Jud heartily. "Not much of a shot is right. If there were a flock of balloons goin' by at thirty feet you could n't get one with a shot-gun."

"None of these chaps will play around with me," went on Fred, pretending not to hear the interruption. "I want something to do."

Negouac looked worried. It was evidently part of his duties to keep these visitors from afar amused.

"I talk to Haidahn," he said finally.

That night the old chief joined them around the camp-fire and a few moments later was followed by the giant Saanak. Ever since their adventure with the orcas the whale-killer had attached himself to the Indian boy and tonight he curled himself up near Joe at the edge of the firelight with Tilgalda, at a respectful distance from the chiefs.

As they sat full-fed around the fire, the talk turned to hunting and fishing. The Indians were never tired of telling and hearing about their lesser brethren of earth and air and



water. They spoke of the beast-folk as of friends or enemies whom they had learned to respect or fear or hate from long lifetimes of meeting with them. Some were brave like the bear, others were cruel and treacherous like the wolf-people and there was the malignant carcajou, the wise beaver and the crafty fox. The habits of all the animals, their likes and dislikes and their strength and weaknesses all seemed an open book to these hunters whose very lives often depended on their knowledge.

"You certainly know them all," remarked Will at last admiringly when the talk flagged a little.

"All but one," said Negouac after a pause.

"Which one?" inquired Fred, much interested.

For a moment no one answered.

"Which?" persisted Fred.

"Mahmut," at last muttered Tilgalda with his strange sidelong glance.

"Mahmut," repeated Jud. "That means 'monster.' What does it look like?"

Once more the same silence fell upon the little group. Then Tilgalda spoke again.



"He live far underground," he said in a low voice. "When he come aboveground he die. Something of evil come to him who look upon Mahmut alive or dead. He one of bad-luck animals."

"Bad luck animals!" scoffed Jud, "there ain't no such thing."

Haidahn looked at him reprovingly.

"White men know nothing about animals," he said at last. "Many of them bring bad luck. Mahmut is one. Another, men meet on the northern ice, a little black animal about size of mouse with long nose and crooked jaw."

"One of the shrews," ejaculated Will the naturalist.

"Unless man stands still and keep talking," continued Haidahn, "little animal runs at him, burrows down under his skin to his heart and kills him."

"Fred, he 'd be safe," murmured Jud.

"But what about this Mahmut?" persisted Will.

"My brother he saw Mahmut," went on Tilgalda, "and was killed by bear. Then I



go to look at it and the next day bear nearly kill me."

"What does it look like?" queried Fred.

"Big, big," returned the Indian, "bigger than this teepee and covered with long hair. Little pig eyes, big curved teeth twice as long as a man, long nose down to the ground."

There was a silence while the Argonauts considered the matter. It was evident to all that the Indian was trying to describe something which he had actually seen.

"The only animal which is as big as a teepee and has teeth longer than a man and a nose which touches the ground," Will finally said, "is an elephant, and there certainly are n't any elephants up here. Where was it that you saw Mahmut anyway?"

"One day to the west near the great glacier," returned Tilgalda. "He stand in middle of great block of ice. I not know whether he dead or only asleep he stand so still. He very dreadful to look upon."

His hearers realized that whatever the strange animal was it must have been something fierce and unusual to have frightened a



seasoned old hunter like Tilgalda, who did not fear to meet a grizzly single-handed, or to take his chances with a wolf-pack.

"Can you guide us there?" Will asked finally.

Tilgalda looked at Haidahn doubtfully.

"Take them," said the latter at last. "It may be that the medicine of the white man will keep them safe."

"You 've said something," assented Jud, patting his rifle. "I carry a little good medicine here that will take care of any kind of magic."

Early the next day the Argonauts were on the march, with Tilgalda as a guide. All the morning the party crept through deep ravines and worked their way through mountain passes and defiles until noon found them on a little plateau. Across a wide valley they could see a glacier winding its way down an opposite peak like a vast shining serpent. Masked by bare mountain ranges it could only be seen from the one point where they stood and one might hunt that country for a lifetime nor ever know that there was a glacier in the heart of that tangle of impassable cliffs



and towering peaks. As they started to cross the table-land they found their path barred by a sphagnum bog, probably the remains of what had been a mountain-lake a thousand years before. For a hundred acres the ground was covered with the green-gold sphagnum moss which held the water like a sponge and into which they sank knee-deep when they attempted to cross. Everywhere were tiny saplings of spruce and hemlock sometimes joining together in thickets but usually scattered here and there over the broad wet expanse where in places the water had collected into pools.

"How much farther do we go?" inquired old Jud, drawing his feet disgustedly out of the bog into which he had sunk deep at the very first step. Tilgalda waved his hand toward the opposite mountain-side some five miles away.

"Well," asserted the old trapper, as he sat down on the dry bank, "here is where Judson Adams, Esq., lies down an' takes it easy for an hour or so. We're near enough the place so that there ain't no special hurry."



The rest of the party followed his example, all except Will, who as the scientist of the party longed to examine more closely that sphagnum bog. There are always rare orchids and strange flowers to be found in sphagnum bogs and even the birds which haunt them are different from those which are seen anywhere else. To-day as he stopped at the edge of the marsh he heard a loud, unfamiliar song which sounded something like "Chip, chip, chippy, chippy, chippy, chippy, chippy." The singer was a gray bird with a line over its eye like that of a red-eyed vireo, which it much resembled, except that it had the pointed warbler beak which when it sang opened so widely that it seemed as if it would split apart. For a moment Will stared at the bird with all his might and at last recognized it as the rare Tennessee warbler which an expert ornithologist had pointed out to him in migration as one of the rarest of the warblers, telling him that its nest and nesting habits and even its song were almost unknown. Will had the spirit of the true naturalist to



whom a new bird, a new flower or a new nest is like hidden treasure.

"You fellows stay here and rest," he said. "I'm going to explore this marsh," whereupon he plunged in, followed by the faithful Fred, who ever since the year before had been trying to get his merit badge in bird and flower study. Just beyond the Tennessee warbler came a jingling little song something like that of a chipping sparrow from another bird which had a chestnut top-knot and a quaint habit of constantly wagging its tail up and down. When Will saw that its throat and breast were of a dingy white he recognized the palm warbler, the Western relative of the Eastern yellow palm warbler with its bright yellow underparts, the first of all the warblers to come north in the spring migration. As he listened to the singers he realized that somewhere in that marsh were hidden their almost unknown nests. None of the bird-books which he had read gave any information about the nesting habits of these birds but he and Fred at once made up their minds to be among



the favored few who had actually seen the nests of these warblers. Accordingly they splashed into the marsh, followed by loud jeers from Jud, who could not imagine any one hunting a bird unless it were good to eat and in a few moments were out of sight behind a fringe of bushes.

It was Fred the novice who had the first luck. Splashing through the wet moss he parted the long grass and matted twigs in every likely place within reach with a long stick, in accordance with the most approved methods of experienced birdnesters. Suddenly he saw peering out from the side of a tussock the little spectacled face of a Tennessee warbler. As he came nearer the gray bird slipped away like a shadow, lit an instant on a nearby bush and then seemed to fade away, giving only a few faint alarm-chips as she went. There, overhung by grass and shaded by the four green leaves of a dwarf cornel and beneath a tiny spruce sapling, was a little nest set in the side of a sphagnum tussock and made entirely of dry grass. It contained six white eggs peppered thickly with tiny russet-brown specks.



For a long time the two boys stared into the nest of a Tennessee warbler. Probably the ornithologists who had found this nest could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and both boys felt that never-to-be-forgotten thrill which every bird-student feels when he first discovers a new and unknown nest.

This was but the beginning of one of the most delightful hours that either of the boys had ever spent. It was Will who made the next discovery. From under a Labrador-tea bush a bird flashed out not four feet away, alighted on a nearby branch and by the twitching of its tail identified itself as the palm warbler. The nest was on the ground and made of fine grass and horse-hair with an inner lining of gray and white feathers and held four long, white eggs wreathed at the larger end with a reddish-brown aureole. After this they found other nests of both these varieties which were common in that marsh. Always the feather-lining identified the dwelling of the palm warbler and Will told Fred that this was the only warbler's nest found on the ground which was lined with feathers, al-



though several of the tree-nesters of that family such as the myrtle, the black-poll and the pine warblers always insisted upon feather-lined homes.

As they came beyond the last palm warbler's nest Will suddenly pointed out to Fred a tiny northern hare crouching under a bush. It could not have been more than a few days old but already it had learned the first lesson of all the hare-family—to lie quiet no matter what happens. Unfortunately for Bunny its soft nose was covered with the fierce mosquitoes of which the marsh was full and in spite of itself it could not avoid twitching it slightly from time to time as the sting of their bites became unendurable. It was this tiny movement which had caught Will's eye. Both boys crept up until they were within two feet of the little animal, which still lay perfectly quiet, and it was not until they stroked its soft back that with a tremendous bound it leaped the bush and disappeared in the marsh beyond.

As the boys beat back and forth across the marsh from mid-sky dropped a sweet whinny-



ing note like the tones of some high-hung aeolian harp. At first they could see nothing. Then a black speck suddenly showed and vol-planing down came a bird with a long beak and flashing wings whose rapid beats made the wing-song to which they had listened. As it coasted down the sky and disappeared in the marsh Will recognized the Wilson snipe which he had seen in the spring passing through Cornwall in migration. Here it was nesting. For a long time they searched for its rare and well-hidden nest. It was not until Will stepped on the very tussock where the mate of the singer was brooding her beautiful eggs that she fluttered off her nest of withered fern.

Everywhere were painted trilliums, studies in triangles. In the center of triangular white petals was splashed a carmine red triangle while the petals were set in a green triangle of sepals which in their turn were enclosed in a reversed triangle of green leaves. Beyond the part of the bog where the snipe's nest was found they came to a curious peat formation. It seemed to be filled with tiny



matted roots and the peat itself cut like black, smooth wax. Poking a stick down through the layer of peat Will found a solid mass of underlying ice which never melted even in midsummer. The ground was covered with moss and tiny stunted, spreading trees. Here and there were pitcher-plants and sheep-laurel and dwarf larches and spruces. Overhead now and then flew pairs of red-breasted mergansers so near that both the boys could see the dark-green crested head of the drake with a white ring around the neck and the white, black-barred wings. Always the female merganser led the way, the male flying submissively behind her. In one place was a bowl-shaped hollow nearly filled by a spreading, stunted spruce tree. As they approached this there was a loud rustling and pattering and suddenly from under the fringe of the tree burst a female merganser that flew off like a bullet, squawking loudly as she went. Fred crawled in under the tree and found the nest about six inches in diameter and four inches deep rimmed around with down taken from the bird's breast, while the bottom was lined



with fragrant bay-leaves. It contained nine eggs which looked much like brown hen's eggs except that they were more oval. As they came back to the main bog from the tops of the taller trees they heard a curious song which was unfamiliar even to such an experienced bird-expert as Will. "Chickaree, chickaree, chickaree, chick," it sounded on all sides of them with a peculiar bell-like timbre something like the ringing notes of a Carolina wren. Twice the bird would sing this loud, ringing strain and then would come a strange bar of melody almost like a little laugh set to music. A moment later there would come a series of notes like those that a fish-hawk gives, "Chu, chu, chu, chu." It did not seem possible that all of these different songs came from the same bird. At last, however, with much difficulty Will managed to focus his field-glasses on the singer and to his great surprise found that it was the ruby-crowned kinglet, that tiny bird with the concealed red crest on the crown of its head and a wing-bar. In migration Will had often heard its intricate, beautiful song but found that that was



nothing like the performance which it gives at home. It was Fred however who first heard the great singer of the day. They were in a little gully in the marsh half-filled with brush and stumps and tangled masses of long grass and sphagnum moss. Suddenly there sounded a wild song filled with ringing, glassy overtones such as one makes by running a moistened finger along the inside of the rim of a finger-bowl. The notes of the song dashed and tinkled against each other, rising at times into a perfect spray of melody with a dancing lilt through it all. At last they saw the singer, the little winter wren, the fourth smallest bird in America. It hardly seemed possible that this tiny, inconspicuous bird which the boys had often seen bobbing and courtesying along the edge of brooks during the fall and winter could hold so much melody.

All around them grew amethyst sheets of rhodora against a background of the pure white petals of the shadblow, while in places the marsh was filled with pussy-toes, a variety of cotton-grass with what seemed to be a



little soft dab of brown fur at the end of each stalk. Suddenly Will fell on his knees in the wet moss and when Fred reached him he found him kneeling in admiration by a little colony of brilliant flowers. Out of the moss at the end of bent stems, each with a single lily-like leaf, nodded brilliant blossoms. The petals of the pouch-like flower were crimson with deep purple lines varied with pink and shading to yellow. It was Will's first sight of that lovely little bog orchid, the calypso. For long both boys bowed before these little marsh-dwellers. Then Will told Fred, who was the real flower-lover of the two, that all the rest of the family of this orchid lived in the East Indies. She alone had strayed into the North, thousands of miles away from the rest of her kin. The last sight that the boys had as they turned reluctantly away from these marsh-dwellers was the flash of their colors—purple, pink and yellow gleaming against the setting of the gold-green sphagnum moss. A little later Will found another orchid which delighted him even more than had the calypso, although Fred at first could see nothing inter-



esting or beautiful in it. There was only a naked, crooked stem some fifteen inches high on which seemed to have alighted a little swarm of tiny flies. When Fred looked close he saw that what seemed to be insects were really the brownish-purple blossoms of that rarity, the crane-fly orchis. Will told Fred that the insignificant little plant was one of the prizes which comes to an orchid-hunter only seldom in a lifetime and was perhaps the rarest orchid on the North American continent except the smaller whorled pogonia with its greenish-yellow flowers set in three dusky purple sepals. Once this species must have been scattered widely over the world, for today in the Himalayan Mountains, a crane-fly orchis is found exactly like the one which grows so sparsely on the North American continent except for a slight difference in the tip of the leaf.

At last tired and dripping and bitten and stung with mosquitoes and black flies but happy with the happiness which only orchid-hunters and birdnesters know, the two came



back to the rest of the party who were anxiously waiting for them.

"We're huntin' underground elephants," grumbled Jud, "not dicky birds."

Tilgalda stopped Jud's retort by leading the way down the slope by a trail which skirted the marsh and stretched directly across the low-lying ridges which separated them from the shining glacier on the opposite peak. When they reached the tip of the glacier the walking became more difficult. Down from the far heights above, this vast river of ice had plowed its way. Nothing could withstand the approach of the almost incalculable weight of its moving mass. Vast boulders were picked up and carried forward like chips on the surface of a stream and the edges of flinty granite cliffs sheered off clean. In other places the crystal plow-share of the glacier had thrust its way deep into vast banks and ridges of frozen earth and torn them from the bed-rock below, carrying them along irresistibly and sealing in clear ice rocks, boulders and trees which thereafter moved with the ir-



resistible march of the glacier itself. Along its edge Tilgalda led them. Up and up the party pressed its way until they came to where stark and bare a vast bank of clay and rubble had been cut through perhaps a century back. As they rounded a bend in the dry bed of what had once been a mountain-brook Tilgalda, who had been leading the way, stopped with a hiss of his indrawn breath and with outstretched arms bowed forward as if in the presence of the Great Chief himself. At his shoulder was Will, who had chanced to be next to him as in single file the party had followed the trail. As the boy looked up at the wall of transparent ice which towered above them a strangled cry of alarm broke from his parted lips. There above him frozen in a solid block of clear ice towered a monster such as had not walked this earth for ten times ten thousand years. Unburied from the grave where it had rested, untouched by time and intact as when some unknown fate had overtaken it when the last ice age overwhelmed the earth, the monstrous erect body seemed ready to step forth out of an age-long sleep. Its vast body,



larger than the largest Indian elephant, stood over nine feet high at its fore-shoulder and was covered with a thatch of drooping black hair which hung two feet long over the huge bulk. Underneath this mass of hair showed thick, massed, reddish-brown wool. The vast curved trunk made it evident that the monster was some member of the family of which our present-day elephants are all that remain. It was the tusks which gave Will the clue to the name of the strange monster. They stretched out for some six feet and then curved back on themselves while the points of each tusk turned toward each other and not outward as those of an elephant. The boy remembered that on a vacation trip to New York he had once seen the skeleton of a mammoth which showed those same vast back-curved tusks. To-day he saw the monster as it looked when it fed among the tundras and frozen wastes of the far North a hundred and a hundred thousand years ago. There was something sinister and menacing in the great beast's appearance. The wicked little pig-eyes were set much farther back than those of an elephant and were



wide open and seemed to threaten the boy as he looked at them. Almost he expected to see the huge trunk upraise and to face the terrible charge of those curved tusks as when the mammoth fought the hairy rhinoceros on those northern plains and the saber-toothed tiger, the vast cave-bear, and the cave-lion watched the fray and the few men of that earliest stone age skulked for their very lives. There was something unearthly and unnatural in the very presence of the giant mammal and Will was almost ready to share Tilgalda's belief that he who saw to-day what the earth had hidden away ages ago must pay a price in danger and disaster. One by one the others joined him and looked long at the threatening monster. The sheet of ice which walled it in front, under the summer sun, had melted down to a few inches in thickness and was as transparent as glass. Although the boys knew that there was nothing supernatural about the mammoth, yet no one wanted to stay near it any longer. Even old Jud, the most practical of men, felt the menace of which Tilgalda had spoken.



"It kind of seems," he whispered, "as if it weren't right to see this. Let's get out of here."

As they turned down the path their last glimpse of this monster of a forgotten age showed its grim figure towering above them as if it were guarding its grave against the puny presence of latter-day creatures.

"Now for the bad luck," remarked Fred cheerfully to Tilgalda, as they wound their way down the long slope.

"It come to him," returned the Indian, pointing to Will. "Mahmut looked on him first."

"How about you?" persisted Fred.

There was a pause.

"I've paid," said Tilgalda at last, pointing to the terrible scars on his twisted, distorted neck.

In that high latitude it was light enough to read all night long and when the party reached the other side of the bog on their homeward trip Will begged for another hour to examine some of his beloved birds' nests. This time he decided to hunt only for nests, so the bot-



anist Fred stayed with Jud and Will left them, promising to be back within the hour.

"Look out," called Fred jokingly, "the Mahmut will get you in the marsh."

"I'll be watching for him," said Will laughingly as he waded into the sphagnum.

For a time the rest of the party lay on their backs on a bank of soft dry reindeer moss. Finally they decided to hunt along the upper slopes of the hill down which they had come, on the chance of running across a deer. Following the slopes here and there they zig-zagged away from the marsh until they reached a black canyon hemmed in by huge ridges which ran down until they met a little stream that went racing through its depths. It was deep and dark, with silent pools never touched by the rays of the sun. Tiptoeing down a winding path they followed the canyon which stretched like a sword-slash across ridge after ridge. Finally far ahead they saw where it opened out, apparently at the far end of the marsh in which Will was hunting. The wind blew in their faces as in single file the party



crept silently along toward the opening where, if in any place, they would be likely to find game. Turning a sharp corner of the ravine they found themselves in a narrow glade full of withered grass which widened out to the very edge of the marsh. At that moment Tilgalda held up his hand warningly. Far ahead they saw some large animal moving through the tawny herbage. So lithe and silent and cautious was its every movement that it seemed to drift forward like a yellow wisp of smoke. Through his field-glasses in the dim light Jud made it out to be a mountain-lion. Once it turned and looked back, but they were in the shadow and even the fierce pale gooseberry-green eyes did not see them. It was evident that the great cat was hunting something. At the very end of the glade he crouched with every muscle tense, head laid between his extended fore-paws while his long lithe tail swayed at the very tip with a gentle waving motion. It was a far shot in the uncertain light but Jud suddenly raised his rifle to his shoulder. He knew that once in the bog the chances were that the animal would scent



them as they approached and would disappear like a shadow in the long grass. Gradually the tail stiffened until only the tip moved back and forth. Every muscle of the cougar was taut and tense as it crouched lower and lower. When the tail stopped moving the spring would come. Jud waited until in the wavering light he had his sight clear and fair just above the fore-shoulder, believing that the distance would drag the bullet down far enough to make the fatal shoulder shot. Just as the tail stopped moving he squeezed the trigger. The shot and the spring came almost at the same instant. Like a tawny streak the great beast left the ground just as the whirling, pointed, steel-jacketed bullet pierced his fore-shoulder and cut directly through its heart. There sounded a wailing, snarling shriek followed by a shout for help.

"That's Will!" exclaimed Fred, sprinting like a race-horse down the canyon, followed closely by Joe, while the slower Tilgalda and Jud brought up the rear.

At the edge of the marsh deep in the sphagnum moss and a tangle of small bushes they



found Will struggling out from under the tawny body of the cougar which was twitching in its death-agony. Fred and Joe pulled him to his feet.

"Are you hurt?" panted Fred.

"I don't think so," gasped Will uncertainly, feeling himself all over. "What happened anyway? I was just looking at another nest when something landed on me from behind. For a moment I thought the Mahmut had gotten loose."

By this time the other two had reached them. Jud looked down at the long tawny body with the grinning jaws stiffening in death and then back at the distance they had covered. Then he puffed out his chest.

"Some shot," he murmured modestly.

"Say, Jud," shouted Will, grasping his hand, "I'll tell the world it was."



## CHAPTER XI

### THE NIGHTMARE OF THE SEA

**A**T last came the night when the Argonauts were again taken by Haidahn to the lodge of the Great Chief. All that day they had remained fasting in the teepee. The bear-claws too had been taken from their necks by their original owners. Each one whispered as he did so, "I take mine to make room for thine." Once again they passed through the jaws of the serpent and stood before the Great Chief. At either end of the lodge hung swinging braziers in which smoldered pine knots which burned with a dull red glow. In the center of the lodge blazed a fire of driftwood whose flames flickered up in sparkles of blue and green. In front of the fire on the raised couch covered with heaped-up skins sat the Shuman. Shrouded in the shadows, the shifting flames



now showed, now hid the stern aquiline face, the snowy hair and the dark glowing eyes. From somewhere in the background came the maddening lilt and beat of magic drums. The air was heavy with the tingling scent of some strange perfume burning in the braziers. As the Argonauts stood waiting for they knew not what, the fasting, the throb of the drums and the slow eddying clouds of incense made the blood drum in their temples. Will found himself feeling as if all that he had known and done were dreams and that now for the first time he was about to awake into real life. Fred was shaking and trembling all over and beads of sweat showed on the faces of even old Jud and the impassive Joe. Just when it seemed to Fred as if his brain would burst if the music kept on and his heart would break if it stopped, there came a silence so sudden that it was like a blow. It was broken by the voice of the Great Chief. The slow, deep tones rang like some heavy bell tolling underground as he intoned what was evidently a formula of the initiation.

“Who would fare to Goreloi, the Island of



the Bear?" and his voice dropped with a crash on the last word. Haidahn, Negouac, Tilgalda, Alnitam, Alunak, Saanak, three others unknown to the Argonauts and, last of all, Will stepped forward.

"By what token come ye?" boomed the great voice again. Each candidate in silence stretched forth the claw which he wore.

"Who vouches for these others?" questioned the Chief again as Jud and Joe and Fred were pushed forward.

"I," said Tilgalda, the bear-hunter, putting his hand on Jud's shoulders.

"I," echoed Negouac, his huge arm encircling Fred, and "I," shouted Saanak, towering above Joe.

Around the neck of each of them as they came the Shuman clasped a claw, repeating the same invocation which Will had heard. "Be brave, be brave, be brave."

Followed a long silence as the party stood in a circle around the Shuman, who with closed eyes seemed to have forgotten that they were there. Again the drums throbbed in the darkness and the wavering incense clouds



floated up from the braziers. Suddenly the silence was broken by Saanak. The tawny haired giant had stood motionless with closed eyes ever since the claw had been clasped around Joe's neck. Then his great body began to quiver and shake. He stepped out of the circle until he stood directly before the Shuman, who kept his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Thou and I, O Great Chief," he half-chanted, "travel soon, far and far into the darkness." Haidahn made as if to stop him but Saanak motioned him back. "To-night is my night of power," he went on.

"He's fey," muttered Jud to the awe-stricken boys. "I've seen Norse sailors taken that way before. Just before they die the second sight comes on them."

"Oh, ye Free People, to-night thou shalt see what never man saw before. Be brave, be brave, when that thou face the Eyes of Death," and the strained voice of the overwrought man broke and quavered. Slowly the Great Chief rose and threw back the mantle with which he had shaded his face.

"Peace, thou over-burdened one," he said.



"Life comes and goes from the dark into the dark. It behooves us who wear the Claw to show others how to live and if needs be how to die," and with a gesture of his hand toward the doorway he signaled that the ceremony was over. In single file the party passed out, leaving the Shuman alone with Haidahn. The silence outside was broken by the irrepressible Jud.

"When do we eat?" he said. "I have n't had anything since last week."

Negouac, knowing the old man's appetite, grinned and disappeared. In a few moments he was back again loaded down with the woven baskets of the tribe filled to overflowing with food. Half an hour later every basket was empty. After making sure of this Jud wiped his mouth and got up with some difficulty.

"Let's go," he said.

Led by Negouac the whole party filed down to the shore where they found the great war-canoe of the tribe waiting for them with the Shuman and Haidahn seated in the stern. Saanak strode ahead and took his place in



the far bow. Negouac and the Argonauts crouched down in the middle of the long craft while the other six paddled. Across the sky half-lighted all night long with the rays of the hidden sun a wan half-moon showed like a ghost now and then through a drift of clouds driven by a wind too high to be felt on earth or sea. As the sky darkened a great arc of light spanned the western horizon. Then a ghostly procession of dull reds, tender greens and strange blues unknown to earth flickered across the sky in colors of such unearthly beauty that even the Indians stopped their paddling to look. Again great streamers would wave and snap in curtains of color athwart the sky as if blown by winds beyond the world. Yet neither in nor under the silent sky was there a sound. Gradually all the colors blended into a great flaming arch which spanned and lighted the whole western horizon. Shimmering waves of different colors flashed across the arch until it looked like a wavering rainbow of the night.

"The Lights of the North," muttered Negouac to Jud who sat nearest to him.



"Never before have I seen them show like this in summer. They foretell some great happening."

"Probably they foretell that it's goin' to rain," returned the practical Jud.

Shrouded in his heavy mantle the Great Chief crouched in the stern with his steering paddle and set the course of the canoe toward the middle of the flaming arch. In a few minutes the Northern Lights dimmed and passed until once again there was only sea and sky and the pallid gleam of the setting moon. In the east the dark clouds massed, hiding the light of the unseen sun. Overhead the whole sky seemed to be moving and marching. Still no breath of air stirred the water. Across smooth swells like black satin the great war-craft cut its way, driven by the powerful beats of the swinging paddles. Then the air became heavy. The flying clouds seemed to hover closer to the sea. All at once the black water broke ahead of them into a foam of fire and the whole sea seemed to be full of prisoned flames while the water dripped from the lifted paddles in a spray of lambent fire. Then the



air became more tense. Little crackles of sound like the rustling of silk or the snapping of rubber bands could be heard. The boys felt their skins tingling and their hair seemed to stiffen and crackle. Suddenly from the stern where the muffled figure of the Great Chief showed black and motionless a ball of fire appeared on the very end of the up-curved stern. Without a sound it rolled along the gunwale and then with a light swaying movement leaped through the air and seemed to perch and balance on the head of the motionless chief.

"St. Elmo's Fire!" muttered Jud.

"The Corpse Candle!" croaked old Saanak from his end. "It lights you and me into the dark, O Great Chief, but not yet," he went on. "Last night my fetch spoke to me, and said, 'Beware of the sheep of the mountains,' " and Saanak's voice died away into incoherent mutterings.

"What does he mean by his 'fetch'?" whispered Fred to Jud.

"That's the Norse blood showin'," returned the old man. "A 'fetch' is a kind of



guardian spirit. They say it's a sign of death to see or hear one. I think myself he's crazy or half-crazy anyhow with his corpse candles and fetches and second-sight. No one ever—" Jud's voice died away in a gasp as the fire-ball leaped from the head of the Shuman, ran along the row of up-lifted paddles like a living thing and landed swaying and flaring on the shaggy head of Saanak. As it leaped the giant raised his hand as if to ward off a blow. Instantly from every finger streamed a blue flame. Then tiny fire-balls like will-o'-the-wisps showed from every exposed point in the boat. The boys' faces were lighted up by fluid fire that seemed to pour like water off their heads with a low crackling sound. Then as suddenly as it came the flames were gone, the tingling and the snapping died away and only the phosphorescent water showed that some unseen electric storm had been raging around the flying craft. Through it all not a paddler had skipped a stroke. Wearers of the Bear-Claw, all, they scorned to show any sign of fear whatever lay before them. Gradually the gleaming water dimmed al-



though still every ripple from the flashing paddles showed a heart of fire. On and on the speeding boat moved over the still water. Although the electric storm had passed there still remained a certain feeling as of tense expectancy.

"I ain't no second-sighter," muttered Jud to Negouac, "but you mark my words somethin's goin' to happen on this voyage."

The old chief nodded his head. Even as he did so the boat seemed to strike something soft and heavy which gave and moved under the blow. Instantly there was a light jarring, grating sound and for yards and yards around the craft the water seemed filled with a mass of white writhing snakes. Even as the Argonauts and that tested crew looked on aghast the grating gnawing sound at the bottom of the war-craft increased. Suddenly there shot into the air vast twisting tentacles livid and pale in the half-light. Some of them were as thick around as a man's body. All were set thick with sucking discs, some as large as a saucer set with hooks curved and sharp as the claws of a tiger. Higher and higher



the fierce streamers towered. Then they bent inward while their tips quivered and shot forward like hunting snakes. Crunchingly the discs contracted against the skin sides of the bidarka and the sharp claws turned inward, piercing the tough hide until every streamer was locked and welded against the side, holding the boat as if in a vice. Some of the tentacles streamed along the out-stretched paddles and one twisted around the silent figure of the Great Chief himself in the stern. Red stains showed through his robe, but before even Haidahn could reach him he had drawn a keen little axe of tempered copper from his belt and with swift fierce blows hacked through the tentacle which rested on the gunwale. Then began a battle such as few living men have ever fought. The Argonauts gripped their rifles and fired shot after shot into the livid net-work which surrounded the boat and filled the water on all sides. The bullets wasted themselves as if shot into rubber and left no mark and in a moment Jud and the boys discarded their useless guns and like the Indians fought with their light belt-axes.



"What is it! What is it!" gasped Fred as he hacked desperately at one of the slimy fatal tongues that licked out toward him across the side of the boat.

"The 'Kraken! The Kraken!" shouted Saanak from the bow.

"It's the Great Squid, the devilfish!" panted Jud, "the largest fish in the sea. They live on the bottom of the ocean usually. I've heard tell of them but thought it was just sailors' yarns. If I ever live through this I'll believe anything," and he chopped with all his might at a horrid rubbery bulk that writhed nearby.

All around them the sea seemed a mass of lashing, livid sea-snakes as more and more tentacles of the squid thrust themselves toward the surface. It was evident that the fight with this monster from the unknown depths was to the death. Already most of the party were bleeding from the tearing touch of the armed discs that had pierced their flesh before they could sever a clutching tentacle. Haidahn and Negouac guarded the Great Chief who fought for himself that night like the



great warrior he had been. Saanak worked his way down from the bow so as to be closer to Joe, calling out words of encouragement and strange old Norse battle-cries, with his red hair and beard streaming, like one of the Vikings of old. Back to back Will and Joe fought the twining streamers which waved in the air above them or tried to tangle their feet from beneath. Suddenly a great tentacle wound around the middle of Jud's body even as he struck at another which licked at his feet. Before he could cut himself loose he was dragged to the farther gunwale of the boat. At his dreadful cry of despair Fred turned and quick as a flash was at his side hacking with his belt-axe in one hand and slashing with a long keen hunting-knife in the other at the twining, sucking band that was drinking the old trapper's very life blood. The boy wrought in a perfect frenzy of haste and managed to sever the fatal belt just in time. As the armed discs dropped off his body Jud pitched forward on his side faint and sick from the loss of blood.

"I'm obleeged to you, boy," he gasped



faintly. "This sea-devil is some fast worker but—" his words died away in a gasp of horror, while a little involuntary moan ran through the groups of fighting men. The twisted tentacles nearest the boat had suddenly drawn apart and from the depths of the dark water appeared a head of such horror as surely never living man had looked upon before. Larger than the largest hogshead, it was of a ghastly white studded with sharp claws like those with which the sucking-discs were set. In the middle was a vast parrot-like beak large enough to engulf a man and which gnashed horribly at the sight of its prey. It was the hating, horrible eyes, however, which were the crowning fearfulness of this Medusa head. Lidless, of an inky unfathomable black two feet in diameter, wells of hatred, they held an expression of malignancy which the eyes of no earth-born creature ever even approached. The vast demon of the under-sea had come up to see what was baffling his serpent-hordes. Set on either side of the cylindrical head which turned every way on a neck of gristle the vast eyes nearly touched at their edges and glared



from one to the other of the men in front of them with a gaze of fearful intelligence. Not a man even of that tested crew could bear unmoved their gaze.

"The Eyes of Death! The Eyes of Death!" shouted Saanak again.

Then in the half-light the wasted figure of the Great Chief stepped forth and stood stark and tall among his cowering followers. Beyond the broken water and the writhing tentacles he had caught a glimpse of a vast dark mass that seemed to be nearing the boat rapidly. Then for an instant the steady eyes of the man looked into the terrible eyes of the devilfish. A current of courage seemed to pass from that undaunted figure to every member of the band. Suddenly the silence was broken by the Shuman's mighty voice.

"Back to thy darkness, O Demon of the Sea," it thundered, "even now thy fate o'ertakes thee."

As he spoke the streamers of livid flesh writhed away from the boat and shot over the side. The malignant intelligence back of the fierce eyes had realized that it was the men



and not the boat upon whom the attack must be made. Against them the great tentacles concentrated. It seemed impossible that all of the party could escape from the living net of twining serpents that moved forward to enmesh the shrinking bodies in the water. Nearer and nearer to the canoe the great head itself moved until the ghastly beak gnashed and lipped at the very gunwale. One death-pale streamer shot up from the sea toward the Shuman as he stood erect and motionless looking out over the water. The air was heavy with the scent of stale musk. The fatal eyes came nearer and nearer. Not only the tips of the tentacles were in the boat but the thick trunks themselves, until the men seemed standing in a mass of livid coils which only needed to tighten to drag them down into the dark water. Suddenly so close that the boat was almost swamped a vast jaw shot up out of the water studded with sharp enormous teeth. The sea boiled, and up and up, forcing its way through the expanse of twisting coils, came the head of a monster whale which alone was almost the size of the bidarka.



“Cachelot! Cachelot!” almost sobbed Jud. “He feeds on them sea-devils.”

Almost beside the boat right in the faces of the astounded crew gaped the vast cavern of the sperm-whale's jaw. He alone, the unafraid king of the sea, fears nothing that swims or floats or crawls in or on the water of the unknown sea-floor below. On the devilfish, the great squid of the unknown reaches of the ocean, the insatiable nightmares of the sea, the cachelot feeds. They alone are large enough to satisfy the vast appetite of these whales, among the hugest mammals now living. So close to the boat were the great jaws that the enormous, conical, sharp-pointed teeth could be plainly seen. They were several inches apart, fitted into sockets in the opposite jaw instead of meeting opposing teeth as in the case of the orca. The cachelot's enormous head was shaped above like a rounded box and was nearly a third of its entire length, which Jud afterwards estimated at well over sixty feet. From its single blow-hole it spouted vapor in a small bushy spout. With a sweep of its great flukes and a twist of its small flippers the



black head surged through the tangle of tentacles toward that other livid and awful head that was peering over the edge of the boat. The malevolent eyes recognized instantly the presence of the one sea-dweller which the great squid fears. Instantly the foaming water was blackened by jets of the sepia which all squids discharge to mask their retreat when fleeing. With a movement quick as the snap of a whip every tentacle, including those which had been mutilated by the axes and knives of the crew, were drawn back upon themselves. Instantly the vast cephalopod hurled itself forward through the sea by shooting a jet of water out of a hole in its grisly neck. In a second it was fifty yards away from the boat. Swift as its movement had been it was too late. The cachelot is among the very fleetest of all the whales. Swerving its enormous body with a plunge that nearly engulfed the bidarka the giant mammal rushed like an avalanche through the inky musk-scented water. In an instant the enormous jaws had gripped the body of the retreating squid. Immediately the black block-shaped



head of the whale was enveloped in a smother of tearing, rending, sucking tentacles while the great hooked beak gnashed in vain against the tons of fanged bone and blubber that sawed their way steadily through the tangle of twining tentacles. As they writhed and locked in a great straining white mass it seemed as if the whale would be smothered and strangled. No created creature could apparently withstand the tremendous pressure of the twining cables of horn-bound muscle. From the frail craft the little party watched the contest at first in silence. When it seemed as if the cachelot might still be worsted old Jud could stand the strain no longer.

"Go it, whale!" he piped, hopping up and down on one leg in his excitement. "My money's on you! Bite him! Chew him up! Don't let him get no strangle-hold on you!"

The cachelot seemed to need no encouragement nor to have any misgivings. In spite of the locking coils the great jaws opened and closed and sawed their way through tentacle after tentacle in a most workmanlike manner, until they were able to grip the body of the



squid at its center. Then occurred a fearsome thing. From out of the hooked beak sounded an unearthly voice. At first it growled and moaned in a tone half-animal, half-human. Then as the fanged jaws of the cachelot pierced deeper through the tough fibers it rose to a raving shriek of madness and fury indescribably horrible. Slowly the cachelot's teeth pierced to the very heart of the tough, gelatinous mass. The crew had one last glimpse of terrible eyes flashing from out a corpse-white face. Then with a crash of its flukes the great whale sounded and dived down to finish his titanic meal in the depths below. For a moment no one spoke. The whole scene had been like a nightmare. Only floating fragments and slabs of white sections of the tentacles were left to prove the reality of what they had seen. The Shuman gave the signal to proceed and again the steady beat of the paddles sounded as the long bidarka shot forward. No one of the party but bore the marks of the battle and the gashes which told of the touch of the fatal sucking discs of the tentacles.

There was not a sound except the splash of



the paddles. After this life and death battle a reaction set in and no one spoke or wished to speak. The long, lean craft sped over the sea under the rhythmical beat of the paddles. As the sun showed above the horizon all around was sea and sky. Nowhere was there any sight of land or visible marks or ranges by which to steer their course. Yet without compass the Shuman in the stern steered unerringly toward the distant horizon. At last far away where the sky's rim touched the sea, showed what seemed to be a bank of fleecy clouds. As they came nearer the white mass towered higher and higher like a huge castle with turrets and battlements of fleecy cloud and floating mist. Straight toward this white bulk the bidarka drove and as the bank grew higher and higher above the horizon the Argonauts suddenly realized that they were looking upon land shrouded in clouds and mist. A murmur went all around the boat.

"Goreloi! Goreloi!" the whisper ran, and the faces of the weary crew brightened as if lighted by the rising sun. To them it was one of the Fortunate Islands where for blessed



days and weeks they would taste strange, unknown delights. As they came nearer and nearer the outlines of the whole island were visible. It had a mean width of some twenty-five miles. Set in the middle of chill and frozen seas there seemed to be no reason for the mass of clouds and mist which hid its expanse nor for the glimpses of radiant green which showed here and there.

The sun was well up in the sky as the long war-craft reached the rim of Goreloi. As far as eye could see great buttresses and black basalt cliffs a hundred feet high guarded the whole island coast. At their base were massed tangles of fanged reefs and rocks against which the surf broke and boomed. Old Jud viewed this menacing coast with alarm.

"That 's a shore which it 'll be healthy to lay off from," he announced decidedly as he looked in vain for any sign of a landing beach. "No boat that was ever built would ever have a chance in that surf among those rocks."

Haidahn smiled quietly as he caught the old whaler's words.

"We land all right," he said.



"You 'll have to do it from an airship then," returned Jud as the bidarka began to circle the coast, keeping well beyond the foaming stretches of white water where the surf began. For an hour the light craft held its course around the island and still there appeared no break in the rock-bound rim. At last they came to a point where the character of the rocks changed. The cliffs still towered overhead as high and as inaccessible as before. Instead of showing black against the white-capped breakers, what seemed to be a chalk formation like the Channel cliffs of England, showed above the foaming, tossing water below. The sound of the breakers too seemed to change and they broke with an echoing boom as if the crags were hollow instead of the crash with which they struck the solid basalt. Close to where the black and white rocks joined the Shuman signalled for the paddlers to stop. There for over an hour the bidarka held its place under the signalled instructions of the steersman. Keeping it well back from the line of breakers he was evidently waiting for the tide to turn. Little by little the base



of the cliffs showed more and more above the water as the ebb set in. At last the whole side of the white crag showed before them and just at the slack of the ebb-tide, the white-topped breakers died down to a series of great smooth rollers which lipped and lapped at the rocks in strange contrast to their roaring, crashing fury a few hours before. At the lowest of the ebb, among the line of out-lying rocks appeared a stretch of smooth water, which seemed to wind its way to the very face of the cliff. At a sign from the Shuman the beat of the paddlers began again and the long boat zigzagged its way through the rocks until the white crag towered directly over its crew. As they came close to the cliff Jud gave a grunt.

"That Shuman is a wise old bird," he whispered to Will. "So long as he can't go up the cliff he's goin' through it."

Even as he spoke the boys caught a glimpse of a low cave which showed in the face of the cliff as the lapping water drew back. Following the example of the rest of the party, as for an instant the Shuman held the boat poised at the edge of the opening, Jud and the boys



lay down flat on their faces. As a huge swell moved with a sucking, gurgling sound backward from the cliff at a sharp word from the steersman the stern paddlers drove the craft on with one last stroke and pitched forward on their faces. The Shuman steered the bidarka until his end reached the edge of the cave, when he too lay down at full length in the bottom of the boat. Inside the opening the low roof was just high enough to allow the low craft passage. In places the up-curved ends touched the rock. Without raising their heads above the sides the paddlers managed to force the boat on its way. In a few moments in the utter dark a spot of light appeared far ahead which widened and brightened until all in a moment the bidarka shot forth into a little cliff-locked cove which sloped up to a white chalk beach. In a moment the bow grounded, the crew sprang ashore and with a rush and a heave carried the vessel far up over the white shingle until it was safely beached and hidden in a cleft in the rocks.

Around a spring which bubbled clear and cold up from the chalk the party gathered for



the first meal which they had shared since leaving Akotan. As always, the Great Chief sat a little apart. Beyond them the narrow cleft in the rocks which had ended in the cave opened out in front of them until it showed as a narrow canyon hemmed in on either side with rugged cliffs which stretched away toward the west as far as they could see. Fire and frost and water untold ages ago had burned and cut and worn this great cave through the living rock. Along the center of this dark valley ran a stream with a rough trail twisting along its bank. In perfect silence the party ate and drank. None of the Indians spoke and for some reason not even Fred had anything to say. The life at Akotan, the flight across haunted seas, the dark prophecies of Saanak and that nightmare battle with the haunter-of-the-depths seemed like a far-away dream. In the silent valley there was not a sound, no bird-note nor even the noise of the waves without. The meal finished, Saanak did a strange thing. As usual he had kept close to Joe. Now reaching into the front of his parka lined with eiderdown



and curiously wrought and embroidered with rare and beautiful feathers, he drew out a knife. Its steel handle was set in soft lustrous amber curiously chased and inlaid with gold while the blade was of dull gray steel deep cut with runes where it joined the haft. The keen edge showed by a thousand wavy lines how carefully it had been forged and tempered by some long-forgotten smith in the days when a man's life often depended upon the worth of his weapon. It was sheathed in a solid block of narwhale ivory. Saanak looked long and lovingly at the weapon. Suddenly he forced it into Joe's hands.

"It came from a great chief and a far-away land," he said. "Wear it to remember the whale-killer."

Nor could Joe persuade him to take back his gift.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE BLUE PEARL

THE canyon widened as they pressed further into its depths and its sides were more broken and less sheer. In single file they marched, led by the Great Chief, who for all his age walked with as swift and sure a pace as any of his band. Behind him, at a respectful distance, came Haidahn and Negouac, who carried the weapons of their leader, his bow and quiver and the fierce bear-spear with its double-edged head of tempered copper a good yard long fixed with a cross-bar at the end of a six-foot handle. With this very weapon in his youth the Shuman had killed bears single-handed in battles which were still traditions of his tribe. As they marched, the brook rushed down to meet them, babbling, tinkling, talking, changing its tones every moment but never



for an instant silent. In the middle of the trail stood a huge boulder like some squat stone cabin. Beyond this the stream ran through a long stretch of pure white sand. As they reached the great rock, the air was suddenly filled with ringing, chiming notes.

"Sounds like church-bells, underground," whispered Fred. Up from the surface of the water seemed to throb tiny bell-tones which all blended together in one chiming rush of sound that was indescribably beautiful. The whole party stopped for a moment as wave after wave of the music floated towards them as if borne on by the brook itself.

"The Singing Sands," murmured Haidahn to Jud.

The Shuman stood and with folded arms gazed fixedly into the rushing water as if listening to voices unheard by others.

"It is a place of magic," Haidahn went on. "No man may cross or stand on these sands lest the spirit of the place drag him down. It is here that the medicine-men of old-time would come," he continued, lowering his voice as he looked toward the motionless chief.



"Fasting and in silence they would wait on the top of that great stone and listen to the voices of the brook until a message came to them."

For long the band waited while the Great Chief brooded in silence and the air pulsed with the lilting fairy music. At last he started up as one who suddenly awakes and again the march began. As the bell-notes became fainter and at last died away behind a bend in the stream Will whispered to Fred and Joe that there were three other singing sands known. All of them were quicksands, that is sand which although it looks solid is really floating in water. In them all the sand was made of grains of pure quartz so smooth that each particle was a little flake of polished glass. Driven together by the movement of the water, each grain would give out a tiny tinkle of sound which multiplied by a million swelled into the bell-notes they had heard.

"That kind of talk may be all right," objected Fred when Will had finished his lecture, "but it's too complicated for me. I'm going to believe with Haidahn that it's magic. Isn't that right, Joe?"



The Indian's answer was lost in a crash from the cliff above. Bounding from ledge to ledge came a huge boulder. Before one of the party could move the rock was upon them and whizzed like a cannon-ball directly towards the Great Chief. Just as it seemed as if it must crush the life out of him, it struck a little point of rock that jutted up from the base of the cliff and rose in the air, clearing the Shuman's head by a scant foot and disappearing in the stream with a splash that threw water over them all. The silence that followed was broken by Saanak.

"The sheep, the sheep of the mountain!" he shouted. Following his gaze they all saw the head of a big-horn, as the trappers call the mountain-sheep, looking down at them. Its broad twisted horns, black muzzle and white face seemed to lean out into sheer space as it stared down fixedly at them, strangely long for so wary an animal.

For a moment no one moved. Then the Great Chief started on again as erect and composed as if he had not just stared death in the face.



"My fetch has spoken—and is gone," said Saanak again. "I follow soon," and he hurried after the Shuman. As the trail turned away from the cliff the whole party looked up at the rocks above, but the big-horn was gone. For a time they followed the windings of the stream along the middle of the little valley. Then once again their path skirted the cliff-side. Saanak passed Negouac and Haidahn and did not stop until he was next to the Shuman himself.

"I go, O Chief," he said in his singing monotone, "but thou followest close. Farewell!"

As the Shuman turned to answer, Saanak stretched out his right arm, ribbed and gnarled with vast knotted muscles. Following his gesture the band saw once more on a shelf of rock the head of the mountain-sheep peering down at them. There was something so sinister and threatening in its fixed gaze that old Jud gripped his rifle. Before he could unsling it from his shoulder there was a long-drawn hissing sound through the air and a barbed arrow pierced the broad chest of Saanak so deeply that its very feathers were wet



with his blood. Dead before he reached the ground, the giant pitched forward with a strangled cry which was echoed by a shriek from above. A tawny streak had shot down from an upper ledge and even as Saanak fell, a mountain-lion landed directly on the back of the big-horn. The great sheep seemed to crumple beneath its weight and the next second both animals whirled over the precipice to land in a tangled mass not two yards away from the body of Saanak. A bullet from Jud's rifle put the big cat out of pain as it writhed with a broken back. The big-horn lay where it had fallen without a movement. It was the Shuman himself who first examined its strangely flattened body. Reaching down he raised one of the arching horns and, as he did so, apparently lifted the whole carcass off the ground. A murmur of surprise broke from the band. What the Great Chief held in his hand was only the dry tanned skin of a mountain-sheep with the head and horns attached. Underneath lay the dead body of a man, his legs chalked white to imitate the coloring of a big-horn and his fingers still wound around a



short powerful bow of osage orange. Even in death the snaky black eyes of the dead man seemed to contain fathomless depths of cruelty and malignancy, while the copper-colored face showed the same fierce profile that appears on old Assyrian coins and carvings. As the Indians glimpsed the deadly face a murmur of "Kenaitze, 'Kenaitze," went around the circle and every man unconsciously felt for his weapon. Haidahn hurriedly explained to the Argonauts that those of his tribe who came to Goreloi often had to fight for their lives with this fierce, implacable race who had come to the island from no one knew where. Like the Free People they had probably found some secret entrance. Away from the central valley they lived hidden in that lone land, an outlaw clan recognizing no laws, keeping no faith and speaking no language known to other tribes. Haidahn was convinced that this lurker among the crags was not a part of any war-party but only a solitary hunter after mountain-sheep. His disguise had been so fatally perfect that he had been taken for a big-horn and trailed to his death by a moun-



tain-lion even while he was making his own kill. In the dim light of the canyon the little party gathered around the lifeless body of their companion.

"Forthseeing and with strange blood in his veins, yet he never flinched nor faltered even when he knew of his own doom," said Haidahn in a low voice. "He was a true comrade and a brave man."

Then at a muttered command from the Shuman he directed the digging of two shallow graves in the soft sand at the foot of the cliff. There in the twilight of the shadowed canyon guarded by everlasting gates of living rock, with the singing brook at his side and the Bear Claw on his breast they buried Sakanak, the Whalekiller, with his foeman at his feet.

It was a sombre and silent party that continued the journey. With weapons in their hands prepared to fight for their lives at a moment's notice, they followed the winding trail while Alunak and Anitam went ahead as scouts. As the day wore on there was no further sign of the Kenaitze and the canyon



widened out into a broad valley flanked by mountain ranges. Once out again in broad daylight and freed from the haunting sense of danger the spirits of the whole band rose. Jud especially tried to cheer up Will and Fred who had been sobered and saddened by their first experience with sudden death.

"We've all got to go sometime," he said. "The great thing is to quit ourselves like men while we live," which was as near to preaching as Jud ever came. Then the old man began a long discourse on the mountain-lion. He told the boys that it was the same animal as the cougar and the panther and was the most widely distributed of all the American cats, being found as far south as the Argentine.

"It's the same beast that our great-great-grand-dads used to call a 'painter' before the Revolution, and be more scared of than they were of the wolf and the bear, although it's about as harmless as a lynx," went on the old man.

"Harmless, hey," objected Will. "How about that one which jumped me, back in the bog?"



"Well," returned Jud, "when he saw you pickin' flowers and huntin' birds' nests in a bog he thought you were wrong in your head. He 'd never have taken that chance with anybody else. Another thing about the mountain-lion," hurried on Jud before Will could think of any retort, "it's the best eatin' of any animal except perhaps a young an' tender wolf."

"Say, Jud," broke in Fred who had been an interested listener, "you can have my share of both."

By this time they had reached the end of the valley. Before them towered a curved wall of jagged rocks. Past this the Shuman led the party on by a little path which wound between boulders and zigzagged along precipices until suddenly it seemed to end at a rim of rock. There before the astonished eyes of the Argonauts, lighted up by the rays of the setting sun, lay what seemed a fairyland. Before them as far as they could see was a circle of green trees and grass and flowers ringed around by dark cliffs. It was like that little oasis set in a wilderness of ice and snow along the west coast of northern Greenland between



Kane Basin and Melville Bay where a warm current touches the frozen coast. This valley however seemed to have been the crater of a vast extinct volcano. All that was left of the fire and fury of by-gone ages were hot springs which bubbled and steamed everywhere and which gave forth a heat which as on Half Way Island raised the temperature many degrees above what it was outside the crater. As they pressed forward the soft grass came to their knees and the hot fragrant air was like a breath from the tropics. Beyond the grass was a grove of trees hung heavy with fruit. At the sight Jud broke into a run.

"Apples!" he yelled. "To think that I should be eatin' red apples beyond the Arctic Circle!" he mumbled a few minutes later with his mouth full. "It beats singin' sands an' underground elephants."

At a signal from the Great Chief the whole party separated to revel in the many delights to which they had looked forward for so many weary months. No guard was kept, since by reason of some saving superstition none of the Konaitzes ever ventured to set foot within the



crater itself. Jud and the boys enjoyed themselves with the others. There was bathing in warm deep pools lined with white and yellow sand, and wonderful trout-fishing in a little river of ice-cold water which wound its way uncooled among boiling hot springs. Will and Fred found flowers which belonged rightfully a thousand miles south and birds such as the bronzed humming-bird and the beautiful nonpareil finch which must have covered hundreds of leagues of half-thawed land and ice to enjoy that northern oasis. To the Eskimos and northern Indians, who knew nothing of warmer sunlit lands, Goreloi was like Eden itself.

It was the third day of their stay in Goreloi when the Great Chief beckoned the Argonauts and Haidahn and Negouac to his side.

"To-day," he said "we seek the Blue Pearl."

After a few brief instructions by Haidahn to the rest of the band the seven started on the quest. Their path led away from the hot springs across the grassy plain and toward far cliff-walls which showed dimly in the distance. Here and there through the waving grass they



crossed packed and trodden bear-paths fully a couple of yards broad. At the first of these Jud stopped and studied the trail with a puzzled expression.

"The bear that made that road," he said at last, "must have been about the size of a small elephant. I never saw such a track in my life!"

No one answered him and with a shake of his head he followed the Great Chief who pressed forward turning neither to the right nor to the left. On they went through the warm, moist air, waist-deep in grass and flowers, until they reached the distant cliff-face. In its side grim and black showed the entrance of a great cave. Fifty feet above the white sand floor a vaulted rock-roof stretched away until its outlines were lost in the darkness. Down through the very middle of the cavern flowed a bright blue stream, which wound its way along the edge of the cliff and disappeared in the lush grass. Not even Will, the scientist, would hazard a guess as to what mineral had given this color to the water. Joe told them that this was not the place where



the first blue pearl had been found but that the water was of the same color. Then, while the Great Chief sat himself down in the entrance to the cave, began a pearl-hunt led by Joe and Will who claimed to be expert pearlers on the strength of the famous pink pearl which Will found, "Scar" Dawson stole, Joe recovered and Jim Donegan bought. At first the Indians sat as spectators while the Argonauts poked through wet gravel and dabbled in the blue water after fresh-water mussels. It was Fred who made the first find. Opening with his trusty jack-knife a large unio, as the pearl-bearing mussels are called, he discovered in the mantle or lining of the inner shell, an irregularly shaped, white pearl as large as a pea. The sight of this treasure-trove was too much for the two chiefs. Piling up their weapons on the bank where the Argonauts had left theirs Haidahn and Negouac joined the others. Up and down the banks and bed of the blue brook they dug and dabbled and splashed, while in the shadow of the cliff the Great Chief leaned on his spear and watched them. Perhaps his mind ran back to the far-away days of his own



youth when he too had traveled far and suffered much in the seeking and winning of treasure. Farther and farther down the stream the treasure-hunters splashed their way. For once even the vigilance of the watchful Haidahn and the wariness of old Jud were relaxed under the spell of treasure-hunting. Not otherwise would they have left the old chief alone nor have gone weaponless even for a moment in a strange country. As for the Great Chief himself, perhaps like Saanak he already knew his fate and future and that it could not be averted, for he did not call them back nor warn them to be on their guard but sat in the shadow staring half sadly out over the flower-fields and the blue water.

Then there came from the dark of the cavern behind him a roaring, unearthly growl so deep that it clanged and echoed through the cave like the closing of iron gates far underground. At the sound the treasure-seekers, who were then well down the brook, splashed out of the shallows to the bank and ran for the life of their leader to where their rifles had been left. It was too late. Out into the full



sunlight towered such a bear as none of them, save Joe, had believed could be found on earth to-day; the great brown bear of the farthest Northwest that rivals the giant cave-bear which was the terror of mankind in the Old Stone Age a hundred thousand of years ago. It had the concave face of the grizzly rather than the convex face of the polar bear and was of a dusky brown in color, silvered with gray at the shoulders. It was its size, however, that was its most terrifying feature. As it approached the old chief it reared up on its hind legs until it towered a good twelve feet in the air, the largest carnivorous animal in the world to-day. Joe and Fred ran as they had never run in any race, hoping against hope that they might reach the rifles in time. Close behind them was old Haidahn who in spite of his age had passed Negouac and Jud and even Will. Swift as they were the great bear was swifter. Towering like a dark shadow of death he moved forward upon the Great Chief without a sound after the first growl which had signaled his approach. For an instant the man faced the



beast. For the Shuman there was no escape, since no man can keep ahead of a bear, even one as vast as this one. Nor had the old chief any thought of flight. As he stood up for his last fight with such a monster as man must have battled with often in the days when the beast-folk ruled the world, he seemed to put off his years like a garment. Like an old lion he threw back his head with its tossing mane of white hair. His spare figure straightened and gripping his spear with both hands he awaited the charge of the bear. Memories of forgotten, faraway fights may have surged back to his mind as he stood there in the sunlight with the grim brute in front of him while the beat of the runners' feet and the panting intake of their breath sounded nearer and nearer from behind.

"Come then, O Bear," he shouted as he had shouted in his youth in the formula of the bear-hunters. "Come and see which is the stronger. I too have a keen claw and it waits for thee. Come—" the rest of the invocation was drowned in the roaring cough that a bear gives as he charges. The old chief braced one



foot against a point of rock and waited. Then the long spear-head feinted toward the rushing bulk now not six feet away. Like a gigantic boxer the bear struck down at the blade but the blow met only the empty air. Then sudden as the fangs of a striking snake the spear shot forward and the keen three-foot point buried itself just below the mighty fore-paw. With a roar the great animal rushed forward. The long handle of the spear bent and quivered but the old chief, braced against the rock, held it firm until the rush of the bear drove the point deep into its huge chest. Not until the towering figure surged against the very cross-bar with the spear-point through its heart did the chief seek his own safety. Then with the mortally wounded beast almost upon him, he tried to avoid its death-blow by leaping to one side as he had done so often in his glorious youth. Alas, the speed and the strength of long-ago had passed with the years. He sprang away from the spear, but not quick enough nor far enough to escape entirely the last smashing stroke of the dying bear. It hurled him against the rocks with a crash that



seemed to break every bone in his wasted body. For a moment he tried vainly to rise, only to find himself paralyzed from his waist downwards and with evidently only a few moments of life left to him.

"Vex not thyselfes," he said to Haidahn and Negouac as they knelt down beside him in a frenzy of remorse at having left him. "Saanak spoke truly. I follow him close nor could I have chosen a better way to go. Wrap me in the skin of that bear than which no man of my tribe ever slew a greater and bury me here in Goreloi which I found in the days of my youth and have given to my people."

The old man's voice stopped for a long time. When next he spoke it was so softly that it was hard to catch all the words.

"Danger, sorrow and death is always the price of the Blue Pearl," he said very low, the very words which Joe had quoted when the quest was first proposed.

"Come close to me, O thou last of my blood," he whispered to Joe. As the boy knelt beside him the old chief unfastened from



his neck a little bag made of soft leather and fastened with a curious interwoven knot. This he thrust into Joe's hands. "I give to thee and thy friends the Pearl which thou and they sought," he said. "Hold me fast as I go into the dark."

A few moments later with Joe's strong young arms about him and with Haidahn and Negouac clinging to his robe, as if they would keep him with them, the undaunted soul of the Great Chief passed to the reward that awaits those who with no thought of self, have fought and wrought for others.

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The last of the two trains which stopped at Cornwall almost every day except of course on Sundays and holidays had come and gone. In the big library of the big house of big Jim Donegan, the biggest lumber-king in all this big world sat alone. He was smoking an aged corn-cob pipe of unsurpassed range and windage. This was a sign that the old man's mind was troubled. Whenever that happened he always harped back to this particular



pipe. It was of about the vintage of the Centennial and no one could smoke it and think of anything else. Two puffs would be fatal to an uneducated smoker but had only a soothing effect on Big Jim. To-night he certainly needed soothing. There had been a stormy interview with Will's father, a tearful one with Fred's mother and an embarrassing one with Joe's uncle.

"They all seem to think that I've kidnapped their blamed boys and sold them up in that well-known slave state of Alaska," grumbled the old man to himself. "I wonder why the mischief I don't get any word from Nord," he broke out again a moment later. "The more salary I pay a man the more he does as he blame pleases," and Big Jim puffed out clouds of raw acrid smoke until the air smelt like a gas-attack. At that very psychological, critical, selected moment the door-bell rang. Furthermore it kept on ringing. Even from the sequestered depths of his library the old man could hear its insistent, irritating, buzzing rattle. Followed the steps of his well-



trained butler butting down the hall on high. The next thing Jim heard was a beseeching bleat from said butler.

"Indeed, sirs, you must n't go up without being announced," he insisted in the rich throaty British tone which made him so valuable.

"We 'll do the announcin'," shrilled a high-pitched voice. Followed a sound on the staircase like a herd of stampeding elephants.

"What the—" had begun Big Jim when the door flew open and in dashed four disreputable, dangerous-looking characters, with James the butler vainly trying to hold them back. They were armed with repeating rifles. At their belts they wore hunting-knives and axes. They were brown and burned and swarthy from sun and wind. All of them wore feather-lined parkas and tarbosars which came to their hips and were soled with sea-lion flippers. One of them carried the priceless pelt of a sea-otter. Another one staggered under the horns and tanned hide of a big-horn sheep. A third had a Viking dagger at his belt. Each of them wore suspended around



their necks a keen, curved, enormous bear claw. With one accord they sprang upon the lumber-king who was entirely unarmed saved for the aforesaid pipe, no mean weapon. To the terrified butler what happened next looked like a combination of riot, rough-house and assault and battery with intent to kill. Really it was only an attempt on the part of Big Jim Donegan to simultaneously hug and pat on the back each one of his visitors. Strange words straggled out of the unoccupied corner of his mouth.

"Get out of here, James," he shouted to the perturbed butler. "This is no place for you. Lock yourself up in your butler's pantry and don't come out no matter what noise your hear. Furthermore don't you let anybody else come up here to-night as you value your life."

"We dressed up on the train to show you how we looked in our working clothes, Boss," explained Jud. "We would n't let Captain Nord wire for we hoped to surprise you."

"I 'll say you succeeded too," ejaculated the lumber-king.

"Hey, Bill," continued Jud, "open those



windows quick. This is worse than the Shuman's lodge with the incense going," and he gently but firmly took possession of Big Jim's pipe.

"Make yourselves at home," chuckled Big Jim, rescuing his pipe and shutting it up in a drawer. "Don't mind me. The trouble with you, Jud, is that you don't know a good pipe when you see it."

"I'd know that pipe anywhere within two miles," returned Jud, "and I would n't have to see it neither. The boys have asked me to make a report to you, Boss," he went on, plumping himself down in the largest chair in the room. "I ain't much of a talker but here goes."

"You ain't!" returned his host. "Why, Jud Adams, the only difference between you and a talking-machine is that a machine sometimes runs down—but go ahead. Let's hear the worst."

Two hours later Jud closed his report up to the fight of the Great Chief with the big brown bear. Big Jim drew a deep breath.

"It don't seem possible," he said finally. "For the life of me I can't see how an old has-



been and three kids could ever have gone through what you did and come out alive."

"There you go again!" howled Jud, hopping up and down with his wiry gray hair standing on end like the quills of a porcupine. "All the time makin' cracks at my age. I'll bet old Three-toes thought I was pretty young, an' you ask Will an' Fred here if my shootin' ain't just at its prime."

"You bet it is, Jud," chorused both the boys.

"All right, Jud, just as you say," his old friend hastened to agree. "You don't look a day over eighty. Your report is mighty interesting but —*did you get what you went after?*" and the old man leaned forward, every muscle and line of his face tense and expectant. There was a little pause. Then Will and Fred pushed the reluctant Joe forward. The Indian boy pulled out from under his parka a little leather bag. Untying the knot with fingers which trembled in spite of himself he motioned for the lumber-king to hold out his hand. Into his outstretched palm from the little bag dropped something round and shimmering about twice the size of an ordinary



marble. In the lamplight it gleamed and glowed with a magical color that seemed to combine in itself all the blues of earth and air and sea. In its depths was the soft tint of the summer sky, the color of the bluebird's back, the blue of the fringed gentian, the lustre of the veery's eggs, the shimmer of deep, deep water and the pure depth of distant hilltops—all were in the grasp of the lumber-king's hand. For long and long Big Jim Donegan looked and his face changed before them as one who sees a vision come true.

"A blue pearl," he half-whispered.

"*The Blue Pearl*," corrected Joe.

What Cornwall said; what the Argonauts did with the fifty thousand dollars; and how the Blue Pearl sent them off on another treasure-hunt in the far South—all that is another story too.

THE END















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